

JADAVPUR JOURNAL OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

31

André Lévi	About Mistranslations and Retranslations	5
Anne Marie Lévi	The <i>Rāmāyaṇa</i> in Norwegian	13
Ipshita Chanda	Notes towards Tracing the Charit as a Genre	20
Amiya Dev	A Reading of <i>Chha Mana Atha Guntha</i>	33
Colleen Roach	The Concept of Cultural Imperialism in Media Theory and Literary Theory, with Specific Reference to the Work of Edward Said and Ngugi Wa Thiong'o	44
Swapan Majumdar	Approximating the 'Other': Some Shakespearean Renderings in Indian Languages	55
Rumina Sethi	Masks of Imperialism: Resistance and Opposition	63
Uma DasGupta	T.S. Eliot and Edward Thompson: A Few Letters	68
Kavita Panjabi	Alok Bhalla : 1. Ed., <i>García Márquez and Latin America</i> 2. <i>Latin American Writers: A Bibliography with Critical and Biographical Introductions</i>	74
Purna Chowdhury	Pierre Brunel and Yves Chevrel (eds.): <i>La Littérature Comparée: Une Parole Risquée</i>	80
Subha Chakraborty DasGupta	Jaidev: <i>The Culture of Pastiche: Existential Aestheticism in the Contemporary Hindi Novel</i>	86

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31

There has been a delay in the publication of this volume and we apologize to our readers for the same. Most of the contributors to this number are familiar to our readers except André Lévy and Anne Marie Lévy from France who had read their papers at the department, Colleen Roach, USEFI fellow at the University, Rumina Sethi, an Indian scholar in England, Uma DasGupta, eminent historian and Regional Director, USEFI and Ipshta Chanda, our colleague in the department.

We acknowledge the help offered by Dr Subha Chakraborty Dasgupta in bringing out this volume.

ABOUT MISTRANSLATIONS AND RETRANSLATIONS

Casual Remarks on Literary Translation from Classical Chinese

André Lévy

Translation is like acrobatics: it is quite all right to talk about it, as long as you are not practising it. A ropewalker is sure to fall down if he starts thinking whether he should lift the left or the right foot. As you may know, Georges Mounin is still famous in France for having demonstrated thirty years ago that translation is impossible. *Theoretically*, he underlined fortunately enough,¹ and wisely enough kept clear of any job in translation, to my knowledge. Though I have been invited on several occasions to talk about translation, may I confess how reluctant I felt each time. All the more so as I am requested to hold on about renderings from a language unknown to you into another you hardly know better.

I will try to keep to English as the target language, though inexperienced as a translator in this very language. In fact I do not believe that any one can be a successful translator into a language which is not his own mother tongue — the very few brilliant exceptions only confirm the rule.

Nor do I believe in the possibility of good retranslations. There used to be plenty of them in the field of Chinese literature. Why? It is, I guess, rather easy to explain: besides the lack of people knowledgeable in classical Chinese — they are still not that many — publishers had a doubt about the literary gifts of serious scholars as well as about the scholarship of free-lance amateurs: it was far safer and cheaper to get a successful book retranslated from one well-known European language into another, most often by people who had no ideas of the original language. Retranslation does sometimes lead to disaster. May I quote an example?

Arthur Waley's *Three Ways of Thought in Ancient China*, published in London by Allen & Unwin in 1939, was retranslated into French ten years later.² You'll find in the book, pages 72- 73, a delightful translation of a famous passage from *Zhuang Zi*, chapter 3, which reads:

King Hui of Wei had a carver named Ting. When this carver Ting was carving a bull for the king, every touch of the hand, every inclination of the shoulder, every step he trod, every pressure of the knee, while swiftly and lightly he wielded his carving-knife,

was as carefully timed as the movements of a dancer in the Mulberry Wood.

...“Wonderful,” said the king. “I could never have believed that the art of carving could reach such a point as this.”

“I am a lover of Tao,” replied Ting, putting away his knife, “and have succeeded in applying it to the art of carving. When I first began to carve I fixed my gaze on the animal in front of me. After three years I no longer saw it as a whole bull, but as a thing already divided into parts. Nowadays I no longer see it with my eyes; I merely apprehend it with the soul. My sense-organs are in abeyance, but my soul still works. Unerringly my knife follows the natural markings, slips into the natural cleavages, finds its way into natural cavities. And so by conforming my work to the structure with which I am dealing, I have arrived at a point at which my knife never touches even the smallest ligament or tendon, let alone the main gristle.

A good carver changes his knife once a year; by which time the blade is dented. An ordinary carver changes it once a month; by which time it is broken. I have used my present knife for nineteen years, and during that time I have carved several thousand bulls. But the blade still looks as though it had just come out of the mould. ...”³

The way the story is told would call for a longer quotation. I am sorry to cut it short. Just imagine the same, when translated into French, with the butcher taken for a sculptor, and carving meat for carving a statue!

Mishaps in retranslations are occurrences so common that it would be tedious to look for more examples. It is indeed a thankless job to work on retranslation, whether being conversant or not with the original language. If one is, what is to be translated? When there are unbridgeable discrepancies, what is to be done? If one is not conversant, how to avoid traps and pitfalls?

Let us take a last example. Arthur Waley’s *Monkey*, translated in 1942, was quite a hit, selling several million copies.⁴ Recent and complete translations of *The Journey to the West* have still a long way to go before catching up. As an abridged version, which is a useful and quite respectable job, Waley’s work is a masterpiece which masterfully carries across the humour of the original work. Sometimes he is outdoing the Chinese; for example, when coining rhyming names for the three followers of Tripitaka. Monkey, Piggy and Sandy. In the

French versions done by George Deniker,⁵ the three boon companions and guardians of the pilgrim became "*le Singe, Pourceau et Sablon*": the fun is gone.

The Jade Emperor condescended to take an indulgent view. "These creatures in the world below," he said, "were compounded of the essence of heaven and earth, and nothing that goes on there should surprise us."

He adds to the Chinese a touch of British humour which does not quite get across with the French: "... *Rien de ce qui leur arrive ne saurait Nous surprendre.*"⁶

The irony in the original language, it seems, is on two levels: what have been told so far is indeed strange, surprising and unheard of. On the other hand, the complacency of the Emperor is soon to be "surprised" by this "unsurprising" monkey.

As many of you know, French which is so close to English by its words is quite different by its wording. The relationship between Chinese and Japanese could be summed up roughly in the same way. But between Chinese and European or Indian languages there isn't the slightest bridge. Sure, a few words here and there are recognizable like *kafei*, or *Fotuo*, *boli*, *Buddha* and probably *sphâtika*.

Words, after all, are a small matter compared to wording. In this respect, English seems closest to Chinese. Even English spelling may give us a vague idea of the way Chinese writing works. But if you buy a computer and Chinese softwares you will soon be aware of radical differences. The software would offer you half a dozen ways in order to enter some ten thousand different graphic signs. Used to a basically or fully phonetic system we would choose phonetic signs of a sort, but the Chinese would seldom do so. They would deal with devilishly clever systems dissecting and recombining graphic parts around the requested sign.

Let us add, to make short this rather unconventional description of the language, that poetry or good prose tends to use the minimal amount of what the Chinese call "empty words", those which may introduce some clarity about how words or groups of words are related to one another. The net result is that one has to be most careful about word order when deciphering Chinese. Beginners who may try to make sense out of it by jumping from one character to another would usually produce only unacceptable interpretations slipping the possible ones. On the one

hand, terseness is the mark of good style; on the other, each syllable is a word or has a meaning.

May I stop at this in order to point out that few languages offer such opportunities for mistranslations of many sorts. By 'mistranslation' I mean a translation which is not transferred into the target language. In the famous early fourteenth century play by Wang Shifu, called *Xixiang ji*, a title translatable as *The Story of the Western Wing*, we find for example a striking recurrence of the four syllables, that is four graphic signs of expression, *ruan-yu wen-xiang*. The drama is a love story of pre-marital intercourse brought about by a chain of circumstances. I'll spare you the details. The said expression applies to the girl on romantic or hotter occasions. Literally it means *tender jade and warm perfume*.

Chinese is fond of set expressions in four syllables, four words, which may be culled from ancient literature, popular sayings or sometimes from God knows where. These are often stumbling-blocks for translators. Well, our *ruan-yu wen-xiang* occurs as a line sung by the young man on meeting for the first time the young girl. In the translation of the thirties by Xiong Shiyi, for a long time deemed the best in English, it is expanded like this:

She is as beautiful as jade, but softer to the touch, and as fragrant as flowers, but not so cold.⁷

The very recent translation by West and Idema, on the contrary, manages with only six words and ten syllables to convey the enthusiasm of the would-be lover, at the early stage of Act II, first part:

Such supple jade, such warm fragrance!⁸

The same expression is to be found in the fourth part of Act I, where their courtship is far advanced. What Xiong Shiyi translates:

I clasp to my breast her who is like jade, but softer, and who is fragrant and warm.⁹

is more dryly turned by West and Idema:

Here to my breast I press her pliant jade and warm perfume.¹⁰

We should however take into account the fact that the translators were not exactly using the same text. Xiong had a seventeenth century revised one, while West and Idema exploited an earlier rediscovered Chinese text of 1498. But the shorter text is the later one, to some extent bowdlerized; paradoxically the shorter version produces here the longer translation. But both miss one word from the original text, *man* from *bao man huai*. It means that the girl's lovely body fully fills up his breast. As feelings are supposed to be in the breast, as well in Chinese, the implied meaning of fullness thus lost is double, psychological and physical. *Dömmage!*

Ruan-yu wen-xiang is a rather commonplace expression which may suffer briefer renderings if they are called for. But strange or specific ones cannot but be literally translated. For example, in the famous Chinese erotic novel of manners *Jin Ping Mei*, occurs a good half-dozen times a curious expression I never came across elsewhere, *huang-mao hei-wei*, 'yellow cat with a black tail'¹¹, or similar *huang-mao hei-hua*, 'yellow cat turned black'¹². It seems to imply an untruthful fellow, a meaning which can be grasped put in a proper context, though the cat need not be 'yellow', as the Chinese would usually put such a colour on a cat or dog we describe as red. After all yellow in classical Chinese had no pejorative implication: was it not the imperial colour of the last dynasty? Those quadrisyllables are still a marvellous way of saying a lot of things with pretty few words and without committing oneself directly. The ideal of classical Chinese is to say as much as possible in as few words as possible. Due to this terseness translating titles of books, is a fearsome job.

Regarding *Jin Ping Mei*, most translators gave up. Titles have to be terse, but no languages can beat Chinese in this respect. More than four syllables and four words is unheard of. The three words of *Jin Ping Mei* can be unravelled into many threads. Let us keep to the three of them. First it refers to three main familiar characters of the novel, Pan **Jin**lian, Li **Ping**'er and the maid Chun**mei**. Second, *Jin* means 'gold', that is, venality, cupidity and luxury: *Ping* is a bottle-shaped vase, it may imply fertility or stand as an image of the female sex: *Mei*, 'plums', can mean steadfastness as well as sexual indulgence; as a girl's name it stands for *Meihua*, plum tree flowers, as a symbol of pure beauty. Third, for innocent readers, it means, because of its word order, *plum tree flowers in a golden vase*'. The German and Russian translators turned to this last solution which amounts to ten syllables in these European lan-

guages.¹³ Clement Edgerton chose *Golden Lotus*, which stands in fact for *Jin* in the Chinese title.¹⁴

Xiyou ji is a much less perverse case, as it may be translated straightaway by the *Journey to the West*. However, the 'journey' is a pilgrimage, or more precisely a quest for Buddhist scriptures, and the 'West' is India. Some other rendering should be called for. Though one may feel that Arthur Waley's brief title *Monkey* is all right for his enormously successful abridgement of 1942, though not for a complete translation of the novel.

Another example of a translated title beating the original in shortness is offered by an English rendering of the Yang couple: *The Scholars* stands for *Ru-lin wai-shi*, literally 'unofficial history of the forest of literati'. Unfortunately the irony and the scandal-oriented implication of the Chinese title are altogether dropped.¹⁵

In this field as in many others it is, indeed, far easier to criticize than offer a solution. I feel I must refrain from going on and on and put your patience to task much longer. Still may I briefly raise a problem of a different sort about translation. How much of the obsolescence of an original ancient work should be kept? Of course modern slang or too recent terms are to be avoided. On the other hand dabbling with obsolescent prose might turn to be disastrous. Modern translators cannot escape this dilemma: they have to modernize the original works to some extent. So, I would take exception to a fairly common tendency to cut anything odd on the way of wording, telling or thinking in the past.

For example, the famous story of Shen Jiji (ca. 740-800) opens with the following words: "*Renshi nǚ yao ye*." Some translators just drop them. However, a retranslation from the German put it this way:

Miss Jen was a female ghost. This is her story.¹⁶

The same reads in a recent American rendering:

Miss Jen was a fox-fairy.¹⁷

What did after all the author mean by starting his story in this way? In fact, it is a form typical of official biography: in my opinion it is deliberately parodistic, as the object of such an honour is a sing-song girl and moreover, the reader is to discover later together with the lover, a fox-fairy.

The first quoted solution is not exactly translating the Chinese *yao*. The confusion may be due to retranslation — I haven't seen the German version. *Yao*, vague enough, can be a sorcerer, an enchantress, in the meaning too of an overseductive person — and so on. *This is her story* is an addition by the translator. The second quoted version presents the drawback of telling us straightaway that the girl is a fox-fairy, what the author cleverly avoided to do.

I beg to consider with leniency this clumsy attempt to explain activities which goes on better without talk.

NOTES

1. See Georges Mounin, *Les problèmes théoriques de la traduction*, Paris: Gallimard 1963, 296 p.

2. By Deniker, as far as I remember, *Trois courants de la pensée chinoise antique*, Paris: Payot 1949, 198 p.

3. See pp. 72-3. That Waley's translation fully deserves to be called 'delightful' can be shown from comparing it with James Ware's more accurate one, *The Sayings of Chuang Chou*, New York 1963, p. 29:

Butcher Ting was one day splitting an ox for Lord Wen-hui. Wherever his hand touched the ox, or his shoulder leaned against it, or his foot trod upon it, or his knee kneeled against it, there was a ripping or tearing and a zinging of the knife. It sounded just right. It achieved the same good composition found in the Mulberry Grove Dance, Yao's perfect verse of music. "Splendid!" said his sovereign. "How did you ever achieve such skill?"

Laying aside his knife, the butcher replied, "Through my fondness for method (tao), I have progressed in my art. When I first split oxen, I could see nothing but whole oxen, but after three years of practice I never saw the ox as whole. Now I proceed by intuition and do not look with my eyes, for when a sense organ ceases to function, the inner gods take over. Relying upon the natural arrangement of its body, I strike the big cavities and pass through the large crevices. Following such sure things — the veins, arteries, and tendons are never touched at all — the big bones go untouched that much the more! Your best butcher would change his knife once every month, because he has been breaking bones with it. But I have used this knife for nineteen years, during which I have cut up thousands of oxen, and the edge is as good as the day it left the grindstone...."

4. Wu Ch'êng-ên, *Monkey*, Allen & Unwin 1942: Penguin Books 1961, 351 p.

5. Wou Tch'eng-en, *Le Singe Pèlerin ou le pèlerinage d'Occident*, Paris: Payot 1951, 317 p.

6. Waley, *op cit.*, p. 9: Deniker, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

7. See *The Romance of the Western Chamber*, translated by S.I. Hsiung, with a critical introduction by C.T. Hsia, New York: Columbia University Press 1936, 1968, p. 24 (and introduction xxxi).

8. See Wang Shifu *The Moon and the Zither, the Story of the Western Wing*, edited & translated with an introduction by Stephen H. West and Wilt Idema, Berkeley: University of California Press 1991, p. 194.

9. Hsiung S.I., *Ibid.*, p. 174.

10. West and Idema, *Ibid.*, p. 333.

11. See Clement Edgerton, *Golden Lotus*, 1939 and many reprints, chapter VII, p. 107: "You are like a yellow cat with black tail."

12. See *Jin Ping Mei*, chapter XIII, but existing English translations being from the Chinese revised edition miss the expression as it is cut out. Cf. my *Fleur en Fiole d'Or*, Paris: Gallimard 1985, p. 266: "Brigand éhonté de chat roux teint en noir!" For other occurrences, see note p. 1098 of the first volume.

13. See *Schlehenblüten in goldener Vase*, Otto & Arthur Kibat, Zürich: Die Waage 1967; *Cvety slivy vazblotoi vase*, translated by Manukhin & Others, Moscow: Khudojestvennaya literatyr 1977.

14. Edgerton probably picked up the idea from the earlier French translation of 1912 by Georges Soulié de Morant, a very short abridgement.

15. See Yang Hsien-yi and Gladys Yang, *The Scholars*, Peking: Foreign Languages Press 1957, 722 p. In 1976 came out a French version by Tchang Fou-jouei, *La Chronique indiscrete des mandarins*, Paris: Gallimard, 815 p.

16. See Bauer Wolfgang & Franke Herbert, *Die Goldene Truhe*, Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag 1959, retranslated by Christopher Levenson, "A Lifetime in a Dream", *The Golden Casket, Chinese Novellas of Two Millennia*, New York: Harcourt, Brace & World 1964, p. 77.

17. See William Nienhauser, *Miss Jen*, in *Traditional Chinese Stories, Themes and Variations*, edited by Ma & Lau, New York: Columbia University Press 1978, p. 339.

THE RAMĀYANA IN NORWEGIAN

Anne Marie Lévy

Indian literature, ancient and modern, is little known in Norway. Some *Rgvedic* hymns were translated in 1928 by Olav Rytter who had studied Sanskrit. He also translated *Śakuntalā* in 1932. This lack of translations is not so surprising in a small country where most people have some knowledge of English and where those who are interested in India have access to the English translations.

What is surprising is the fact that we have two Norwegian versions of the *Ramayana*, one published in 1924 and the other in 1990. What is quite interesting is the very different impressions that the readers of the two translations get as to what the original epic is really about. It may be safely said that the older translation and the modern version, which is not a translation but an adaptation in dramatic form, far from being only, though perhaps mainly, an exotic reading correspond to interests and preoccupations of the readers at different times the difference being that of the first and the last quarter of our century. If, I admit it is unlikely to happen, these two small books, each about two hundred pages, were all that was left of Norwegian literature after a new ice-age, discovered and studied by an Indian scholar, he might get some modest idea of how Norwegian mentality had changed within the space of those sixty years.

An Indian Sanskritist, Ananda Acharya, who had already translated some Sanskrit works into English, chose for reasons unknown to us to settle for some years in the relative solitude of Norwegian mountains — perhaps because of a special feeling for the supposedly strong and healthy people of the North as well as the Norwegian mountains being the closest possible in his imagination to the Himalayas (one has a feeling he might not have enjoyed the Alps or the Pyrenees which even at that time offered less possibilities for solitude and where people spoke French). There he devoted himself for some years to the translation of *Rāmāyaṇa*, that is. a condensed version of his choice, completely leaving out the *Bālakāṇḍa* and the *Uttarakāṇḍa*. He invited several Scandinavian writers to share his solitude and translate into their own languages his English version. Only one accepted — Arne Garborg, one of the most famous Norwegian poets at that time. Garborg wrote in what is called “New Norwegian” which has since become the second official language of Norway. This language was created in the middle of the nineteenth century, when official Norwegian was very close to Danish,

and was based on various dialects. The writers choosing this language as a literary medium were at that time as a rule nationalists, hostile to city-life and 'artificial' civilization. They tended to be interested in ancient literature, sagas and folk poetry in their own and other countries. This tendency was of course common enough in the Romantic period but seemed to outlast Romanticism in some newly independent countries — we may think of Ireland, Yeats and Lady Gregory.

The Norwegian poet knew nothing about the *Rāmāyaṇa* and very little about India. He was, however, interested in religions and particularly in extirpating from them the religious aspects which he considered to be later additions to what was originally the teachings of some high-minded exceptional person in a given cultural environment. He had written a book, now completely forgotten, called *Jesus Messias* in which he undertakes to prove that the divinity of Christ was a late addition not mentioned in early Christianity. Those ideas were of course quite popular in the early twentieth century. The Marxist revolution had succeeded in the young Soviet Union, realism and naturalism were popular literary trends, religion was easily dismissed as mere superstition.

It may seem surprising that such a poet would be particularly interested in translating the *Rāmāyaṇa*. But Ananda Acharya's version came as close as possible — nobody can achieve the impossible — to remove the religious elements from the original text. His introduction makes interesting reading, even, or perhaps especially, when his arguments are the most controversial and far-fetched. According to him Vālmīki was a contemporary of Rāma who probably lived about ten thousand years before Christ. This was also, according to him, the time of the monotheistic *Ṛgveda* (sic!) which knows only one God, Indra, sometimes adored under different names. This he supposed to be the time when the Aryans established themselves in India, fair-skinned noble-minded people. They would clear the forests, build schools and high schools for their children. At the time of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Ananda Acharya says, there was no question of a class-, much less a caste-divided society. All Aryans were equals, women were free to marry whom they wanted and girls received the same instruction as boys. However, India was also inhabited by aboriginal tribes, a dark-skinned and uncivilized lot, some of them brave in battle, but given to bad customs like cannibalism — as are, even today, says the author, the inhabitants of such countries as Indonesia and Australia. Rāma, the noble king, considered it to be his mission to civilize these people, to

teach them the purity of soul and manners. His exile in the forest, caused by the queen Kaikeyī, a non-Aryan woman from the Middle-East, gave him the opportunity to do this. Incidentally there is a contradiction in Ananda Acharya's introduction. He mentions Kaikeyī as one of Daśaratha's queens but later he pretends that the idea of a king having several wives was added to the epic after the Muslim invasions. Rāma's wife is carried off by one of these aboriginal chiefs, living in Lānka which at the time was so close to the Indian continent that there was no need for a miracle to build a bridge for Rāma's army to cross. Rāma had allied himself with Sugriva, the chieftain of one of the many dark-skinned southern tribes, primitive people but good savages, certainly no monkeys! After a terrible battle he recovers Sītā and returns to Ayodhya.

As we see, very few of the supernatural elements are left out. Rāma is brave, and before the battle he implores heavenly assistance. His special relationship to Visnu is not hinted at, except in a half line in the introduction as a belief arising thousands of years later. Surpānakhā and her brother belong to the Rākṣasa tribe. They are dangerous, well versed in the magical arts and sorcery, but apparently not considered as really belonging to a non-human species. The only really supernatural and miraculous event is the battle of Jaṭāyu with Ravaṇa. It is difficult to pretend that a bird represented some backward human tribe, but the episode is limited to a few lines.

In his version Ananda Acharya left out everything he considers later additions and interpolations — so we are left with a heroic epic poem, with beautiful descriptions of cities, forests and mountains, many of them unabridged. The Norwegian translation makes agreeable reading. It is beautifully written, though how much of the beauty is due to Ananda Acharya's version and how much to the Norwegian poet himself is difficult to say. But Ananda Acharya was certainly a very clever adaptor, nobody unfamiliar with the original would guess that this is not the whole poem — and Ananda Acharya does not care to mention the length of the 25,000 śloka-*Rāmāyaṇa*. Arne Garborg probably knew nothing about it either, and so had no scruples in translating, not an abridged version, but what he believed to be the *Rāmāyaṇa*. He might easily have found out. At the time there was a competent professor of Sanskrit, Sten Konow, at the university of Oslo. But Ananda Acharya says in his introduction that Western scholars are stupid and ignorant, which was an opinion about university teachers that Garborg tended to share.

And there were of course other reasons why he felt no need to question Ananda Acharya's competence or rather — there was no doubt about his mastery of Sanskrit — the correctness of his information. As I have said above, this was a time when it was fashionable to desacralize religious myths, starting with the Bible and the Gospels. On the other hand, it was also extremely fashionable to look for the Light of the East, of Eastern wisdom. Rāma as the first hero, *Rāmāyaṇa* as an inspiration for the far less high-minded Homeric epics fitted this infatuation for everything Indian. More dangerously this version of *Rāmāyaṇa*, or rather, Ananda Acharya's conception of the epic, flattered other ideas. The idea of a northern, Aryan people — it is significant that the term *ārya* is always translated as Aryan, never as noble — fair-skinned and fair-minded, superior to backward dark-skinned races, with a vocation to teach them, if possible, if not to eliminate them in battle, was certainly a welcome idea to many people in Norway at the time, fitting beautifully with their own ideas of the superiority of the North, in contrast with the degenerate effeminate southern civilizations.

We know that this idea would produce poisonous fruits and a catastrophe in Europe and the world some ten years later. And even today, when we should expect everyone to be immunized against this kind of ideas, we find 'scholars' who maintain this belief in a mythical, superior Indo-European (the term Aryan is no longer used) people, with the society pictured in the *R̥gveda* as an inspiring model.

For Æge Bringsværd's adaptation of *Rāmāyaṇa* for the stage is very different. Bringsværd is a contemporary Norwegian writer, prolific, author of plays, novels, science fiction and children's books. He is deeply interested in mythology, not so much from a comparatist's point of view as for what it tells us about general and particular human experiences everywhere. He is also a lover of animals which often play an important part in his writings. It is not surprising that he would be interested in the *Ramayana*, but he sees the epic not as a kind of heroic saga superior to all others, but as a marvellous fairy-tale, "a tale of trust and treason, courage and romantic love", with its origin in India, the mother of all fairy-tales. His play is a play for children and for adults who have kept the child's capacity to marvel at the wonders of the world.

He is as modest about his version as Ananda Acharya is conceited about his. In the short introductory scene where some of the actors explain to the audience what they are about to watch, one of them says that trying to give the correct explanation of what the *Ramayana* really is, is like three blind men trying to describe an elephant after having

touched some of its parts. The total significance of the poem escapes us.

Bringsværd has no qualms about introducing us to gods and demons. Indeed we meet a terrifying mighty Rāvana who is threatening the world of gods and humans at the beginning of the first act. Next we are introduced to Brahmā who sends the complaining frightened gods to Viṣṇu for help. Viṣṇu makes the decision that he will once more put on the human form to save the world. We are not left in doubt that this is playful religion, but is still a religious play staging the eternal battle between good and evil in a very pleasant form. Rāma and Sītā are a charming young couple, very much in love, Rāma himself being quite unaware of his own real divine nature. The demons are terrible blood-thirsty demons — but Bringsværd has some difficulties here. He wants to give them a chance to reform. Śūrpanakhā is more of a foolish woman than a terrible ogress — we even feel rather sorry for her until she in the end shows herself as also quite shrewd when she decides to help Sītā and protect her against Rāvaṇa! Rāvaṇa recognizes Rāma's divine nature before he expires after the battle, and so prepares himself for a happier rebirth. The monkeys are monkeys and we see and hear them a lot; Hanumān is even more powerful than in the original epic. When called upon to bring some medicinal herb from a mountain near the Himalayas he is uncertain about which ones to bring and decides to carry the whole mountain to the battle-field, making the happy mountain remember that once, a very long time ago, he and his mountain friends used to fly about in the air. At the end of the play Rāma and Sītā travel back to Ayodhyā. After their death they ascend to Heaven and resume their original divine beings — which they both had been unaware of on earth — Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī. And, says one of the actors, we may expect them to come back to earth again when the evil forces threaten to destroy the world.

It is obvious that this play has a very different appeal from the more ambitious Ananda Acharya-Garborg version's sixty years before. It can certainly be considered a charming divertissement for children. It also brings to mind the South-East Asian versions of *Rāmāyaṇa* with their elements of singing and dancing. Is it going to warp the text if we look for more meaning than the obvious one, the retelling of an ancient plot in a charming dramatic form? It is certainly possible to enjoy the play at its face value. On the other hand, it should be kept in mind that Bringsværd usually wants to communicate a deeper meaning in his writings.

On several occasions different characters are surprised at Rāma's unawareness of his divine nature. One of them is a bear, Jāmbuvān, who has some difficulty in understanding why gods have suddenly become so infatuated with monkeys. The only explanation must be that there is something special about Rāma and Hanumān, something they themselves are unaware of. This is also what the dying Rāvaṇa says — and Rāma answers that he neither understands nor cares about such words. Agni is equally surprised at Rāma's having completely forgotten that he is an incarnation of Viṣṇu and as such could order the fire-god not to burn his wife. The fact that these remarks are repeated so often cannot be a coincidence and must be meaningful. The reason may be to remind the audience of what they too might have forgotten, Rāma's divine nature. But it may also be interpreted as a question to a contemporary audience: have we not all forgotten or decided not to believe in our own share of divine nature, and are we not at a risk of becoming the prey of demons who laugh at the gods — the Good — having lost their power, as they do in the beginning of the play.

Well, it is the reader's privilege to put more into a text than the author himself may have been conscious of. However, the other message to be found in the play is certainly willed by the author. The monkeys are delightful and play many monkey-tricks on the stage. But, as the bear Jāmbuvān says to Rāma, they are different from you, but do not make the mistake of thinking that their nature is worse than yours. This remark — and the importance of the monkeys in the play — may of course be considered to be a reminder of the Indian respect for animal life, or karma that makes us move from birth to birth in different shapes. But the author also probably wants to say the exact opposite of what Ananda Acharya-Garborg's *Rāmāyaṇa* says.

There is no such thing as superior people or races; there are cultural differences which must be respected. To say this is hardly original today. If contemporary man is expected to have a belief, it is this generous belief in equal rights for everybody. As it has always been the case with noble beliefs, it is hard to put into practice and cannot be advocated too often.

This play is written for an audience that may feel a kind of melancholic nostalgia for religious beliefs they do not consider dangerous any more — at least not for them — but consider to be nothing more than in the best of cases charming fairy-tales. The wish to desacralize in a literary work a religion considered harmful has less appeal to contemporary readers than to readers in the beginning of the century. They may rather

enjoy and find touching the expressions of a foreign faith, and have no problems in accepting a multitude of gods and demons as symbols of good and evil, just as they are ready to accept that monkeys symbolize foreign peoples and cultures that are to be respected.

It is interesting that the *Rāmāyaṇa* has been used to draw Norwegians towards dangerous ideas of racial superiority, and sixty years later for its opposite reason. It is not my purpose here to discuss which of these two conceptions and interpretations is closer to the original poem — I do not want to be compared to the blind men who were positive about what an elephant looked like.

NOTES TOWARDS TRACING THE CHARIT AS A GENRE

Ipshita Chanda

In the 1901 Jyaishta edition of the periodical *Janmabhoomi*, the writer Bhubanchandra Mukhopadhyay asserts¹ that ‘novels’ were being written in India long before the English word novel entered the vocabulary, and points out that *upanyas* is different from novel. In *Meghadūta*, Kālidāsa has the Yakṣī tell the cloud-messenger that when he passes Avantī, he will hear the elders who are skilled in telling the *kathā* of Udayana². What does Bhubanchandra mean when he talks of the difference of the *upanyas* from the novel? How does Kālidāsa or his contemporary reader define *kathā*? When the *Mahābhārata* refers to ‘itiḥāsapurāṇa’³, how are we to conceptualize these different narratives — what identifies the one and demarcates it from the other? These are the questions that will be raised below — not directly, but idiosyncratically with reference to a particular narrative-name which is found in the titles of many texts, ranging from those written in the first century⁴ to those written in the first half of the current one. The question that is posed is certainly not answered. In fact, the reason for rushing in where the more circumspect and better-read would fear to tread is not a quest deriving from the attempt to delineate the contours of a particular narrative-type, but not unrelated to it, either. At the core of the exercise lies a concern with the Indianness of the tools that we deploy to study texts that are part of Indian literatures, whether they be ancient or contemporary. A large part of our current engagement with Western literary-critical systems seems unidirectional — theirs is the method, while ours is the text. One of the many questions on the agenda of Comparative Literature in India seems to be how — or whether — we can apply the critical categories of one literary system to read the texts of another, given the difference between the fundamental logic of each. Consequently, one of our tasks would be to return to classical Indian critical systems and consider the extent to which they can be used, modified or re-articulated given the contexts and influences working on the production of contemporary texts, so that an indigenous system may evolve. There must certainly be many ways in which this question may be posed and answers sought — what is attempted below, as the tentative nature of the title must indicate, is merely an exploration beginning from the concerns outlined above.

We may well begin with the idea of the genre itself — does this nomenclature fit the narrative-type that appears in the title of the texts we shall discuss? What criteria must the *charit* fulfil if it is to answer to the categorization of the genre? And on what basis are these criteria to be decided? Bhubanchandra, who so confidently proclaimed the difference between the novel and the *upanyas* asserts that one way of differentiating the two is that in the former, the fainting of the heroine is a common occurrence — in novels written in Bangla, the heroine loses consciousness at the drop of a hat. He firmly puts this down to the foreign influence — heroines of ancient Indian literature, like Śakuntalā, do not resort to fainting (ibid.). Evidently, Bhubanchandra is not differentiating between novel and *upanyas* on the basis of language — he thinks of the novel as a separate genre. Its separateness is qualitative; the novel embodies an alien influence, though it may be written in the same language as the *upanyas*. Turn of the century Bangla periodicals grapple directly with the problem of East/West⁵, English/Bangla, Muse/Saraswati⁶ as reflected in literature. The course of a contemporary Indian critical canon seems to have begun practically a century earlier, and the use of a different set of criteria, more often than not, is called for. For our purposes, choosing texts entitled *charit*, we will look at their composition, the material, and methods by which they are constructed and then attempt to match them with texts bearing the title of *charit* in the body of contemporary Bangla literature. From the turn of the century critics, we may well learn that the encounter with an alien literary system, especially when that system is introduced from a position of political hegemony, in a language that spells power, is likely to be complicated and have results that cannot be easily quantified. Yet the interactions of these influences with the existing literary system is an inevitable element in the reading of contemporary texts — restriction to either one of these elements will stem the dialectic which produces contemporary Indian literatures, and the critical apparatus required to read it.

Hence, if we begin from the classical Sanskrit literary canon, we find that the *carita* does not exist as a genre at all. But can we so easily answer in the negative? For the controversy between Bhāmaha and Daṇḍin regarding the differentiation of *kathā* and *ākhyāyikā*⁷ does not go beyond these two narrative-types, but apart from his opposition to Bhāmaha's pronouncements on the level of theory, Daṇḍin wrote a prose narrative that he called *Daśakumāracarita*⁸. It is from this text that we may begin to discern the nature of *carita* with respect to the

critical principles that Bhāmaha and Daṇḍin laid down in the course of their argument. Bhāmaha divides the narrative on the basis of the narrator — the hero of *ākhyāyikā* tells his own story, and his material consists of *kanyāharaṇa*, *yuddha*, *vipralambha śṛṅgāra* and the rise or *abhyudaya* of the hero. Besides, only certain metres may be used in the writing of *ākhyāyikā*. Daṇḍin, however, rejects the division according to narratorial position, saying that the hero cannot always tell the whole of his own story — often, there are others who speak of him, as well. He makes short work of Bhāmaha's prescription of metre, and as for the progress of story outlined by him, Daṇḍin points out that this is exactly how the story progresses in the *mahākāvya* as well — why should this sequence characterize the *ākhyāyikā* alone? Though this was not an open, direct confrontation, not least because the dates of each cannot be fixed more exactly than with respect of centuries, Daṇḍin seems to have been engaging with one of the accepted views put forth by a respected predecessor.⁹ In the light of this, if we look at the text that he wrote by the name of *carita*, we find that it is not a first person narrative; neither is the material received or *pralabdhārtha* as the *Amarakoṣa*¹⁰ lays down for *ākhyāyikā*. Hence the *carita* may be *kathā*, as its material is invented, rather than traditionally extant; it is not *ākhyāyikā*, since it is not a first person narrative. Daṇḍin's thesis seems simply to be that it is difficult to distinguish mechanically between narrative-types, and *Daśakumāracarita* is an example of this thesis. Daṇḍin's text infringes upon the limits demarcated by Bhāmaha — it is neither clearly *kathā* nor *ākhyāyikā*. Instead, it is an account of Rājyavāhana and his noble companions, the *daśa kumāra* whose picaresque adventures concern the wooing of princesses and the achievement of their ends, by crook more often than not. Daṇḍin plays havoc with the idea of reality — Mantragupta speaks without labials because his beloved has bitten him on the lip. At most, the figure of Rājyavāhana may be modelled on the patron king. But if Bhāmaha was attempting to define the *ākhyāyikā* by a standard of verisimilitude in categorizing it as a first-person narrative, if the *Amarakoṣa* was attempting to give it an authoritative basis in traditionally constructed fact by designating it as *pralabdhārtha*, Daṇḍin's text did not fit into either description. If the *kathā*, by implication, was a text whose material was invented and which contained an objective narrator, then the text may have been labelled a *kathā* — except that, in Bhāmaha's reckoning, the language of the *kathā* was not Sanskrit, while Daṇḍin's text was written in the language itself. While this blurring of strict genre-division

characterized *Daśakumāracarita*, it also performed another possible service — as one of the first prose works of Sanskrit *kāvya*, it set a model. And almost ten centuries later, in 1923, we find another *charit* planned on the adventures of a single resourceful human being, as cunning and as dismissive of the reality simulated by a first-person narrative as Daṇḍin himself had been in his controversy with Bhāmaha. Trailokyanath Mukhopadhyay's *Damaru Charit* is an account of the picaresque adventures of Damaru, told in the first-person to a group of his friends as they sit in the former's courtyard during the annual Durga puja, tripping on cannabis and exchanging notes. One after another, Damaru tells incredible tales of his prowess, intellectual, physical and sexual, and if his audience protests, out comes a 'proof' more incredible than the story itself. The wondrous adventures of the *Daśakumāra* may be discounted as occurring in an age that believed in human gods and visible miracles — what of Trailokyanath's hero, who has ostensibly lived through the onslaught of realism brought by the English novel? Let us think back then, to the initial devices that lent authority to the realist novel — the elaborate locating of the protagonist in history, with charts, letters and maps to lend authenticity or the fevered rush of letters between the characters in order to present their innermost thoughts and feelings in their own words. The English novel-tradition identified realism with historicity and authenticity with the first-person narrative. Trailokyanath's *charit* upended these concepts that lent authenticity to the narrative by clearly undermining both even while using them as the keystone of his text. When Damaru is imprisoned inside the stomach of a tiger, he writes to his secretary to come and rescue him — receiving his letter, his secretary does just that. This is too much for some of his listeners to swallow, and they raise a storm of protest. With a flourish of disregard, he replies, "Look, don't try to find fault all the time — even I can tell you that there are no post-offices in a tiger's stomach" (p. 229). So Damaru's inverted slavery to truth extends to sometimes surrendering to the irrational, and admitting it, an endeavour that the English realist novel would not quite accommodate. The reason why this comes up here is pure speculation on whether the difference between *kathā* and *ākhyāyikā* was formulated by Bhāmaha on the basis of the authenticity of the first person narrative as opposed to the completely imagined nature of the narrative which was not a first-person one. Was he prompted by considerations of authority, rather than facticity, as well? If this was the case, then Daṇḍin's spirited objection, not only in the form of theory but in the form of literary text, amply

demonstrated the way truth could be manipulated in *kāvya*, the truth of *kāvya* and the truth of life being different. The *carita* by Daṇḍin and the *charit* by Trailokyanath clearly substantiate this — the reality of fiction and its delicate, indeed constructed relationship with truth characterize both the texts, and lead us to ask whether Daṇḍin is laying down the theoretical basis for differentiating between narrative genres not on the basis of the division into absolute categories of truth and fiction, but rather with respect to a more complex matter of representation or fictionalizing. And in picking up this tradition to use in his own text that pays scant regard to the truth-fiction division along the lines of narratorial voice, is Trailokyanath interrogating the hobby-horses of Western realism which at that time reigned across the colonies?

The effect of the Bhāmaha-Daṇḍin engagement does not only bring up crucial questions that these two theorists directly addressed — the interpretation by later critics of the stands taken by these two writers keeps the issue alive. When Viśvanātha¹² differentiates between the *kathā* and the *ākhyāyikā*, he does so on the strength of examples — the former he explains as the category to which belongs Bāṇabhaṭṭa's *Kādambarī*, created out of imaginary material, and the latter is the category where we may place *Harṣacarita*, which is the narrative of the life of Harṣa, and therefore based on historical truth. But this last description needs to be qualified in the light of the literary system we are dealing with. What in this case does 'historical truth' mean, when it enters the realm of *kāvya*? The focus shifts, then, from the *carita* as a first-person narrative of the adventures of a group to the *carita* as a narrative that documents (and this verb is by no means a happy choice, given its un-*kāvya*-like connotation) the events in the life of a *caritra*. It seems inconsistent at first glance — the earlier *carita* was far from the life of historical personages, and their adventures were all figments of Daṇḍin's fertile imagination. What then, did the nomenclature mean? Asking this question allows us to look back at different instances of earlier *caritas* — Aśvaghoṣa's *Buddhacarita*¹³ is one such, and its central character was certainly far more real than all Daṇḍin's *kumāras*. Our initial position is further complicated by this dichotomy of a strand of *carita*-as- truth and another as fiction, unless we are able to apply the idea of literariness to the issue — both *Daśakumāra* and *Buddhacarita* are *kāvya*, and in that sense, their truth is a representational one rather than factual — through the use of the word *carita*. Daṇḍin seems to be making a gesture even more subversive in the context of his own literary system than one may think, for he is using the tradition through which

historical personages were transformed into material for *kāvya* to deal with imaginary personages. However, the method for dealing with historical material as well as imagined material seems the same. As Aśvaghoṣa points out in his *Saundarānanda*, "The matter of this *kāvya* is *mukti*, but it has been constructed according to the *rīti* of *kāvya*. Whatever is introduced, apart from the theme, is there to attract the minds and hearts of the listeners."¹⁴ Aśvaghoṣa's method of writing a life, therefore, conforms to the idea of literariness in the creation of a text rather than attention to historical facticity. The debates among the theorists of drama¹⁵ about the *prakhyāta* plot derived from *itihāsa* or *purāṇa* and the extent to which the received material must be refashioned, becomes the basis for sub-genre division in drama. But in the area of the narrative, there is no such clarity, and this porosity that characterizes the division between narrative-types is a property of the *carita* as well. Hence, the easy identification of *carita* as biography, a move made by contemporary critics¹⁶, seems problematic. But the stand of the contemporary critic may well follow the reservations expressed by a practitioner of *carita* literature. The latter's criticism is not limited to *caritas* or the lack of them in the Indian literary canon, but goes deeper to look at the sources of this lack. Talking about this, Bankim says,

There are reasons for the fact that Indians have no history. They believe that everything that happens, happens because of divine mercy ... they think of the divine as the doer in all cases. Hence, they are prone to singing the praises of the gods; in the *purāṇetihāsa*, they narrate the great deeds of the gods ... the human being is nothing, hence there is no need to sing praises to the *guṇa* of human characters. This timid mentality and *devabhakti* is the reason for the lack of history.¹⁷

The weight of Comte through Spencer and Mill proves here to be heavier than the residue of either Daṇḍin or Aśvaghoṣa. Bankim's demand is for factual history — it is interesting to note that at the opposite end of the scale, he places *purāṇetihāsa*, since *itihāsa* is accepted, however erroneously, as our correspondence to history. This may well be the place from which we can begin. Bankim writes this as the preface to his *Krishna Charitra* (1886), and it is to be noted that he uses the literary form of the word *charitra* rather than the colloquial *charit*, probably to lend authority to his enterprise. Identifying the gap

in the Indian canon, Bankim wishes to fill it. The text, written in 1886, falls in the period when Bankim has turned from an import of positivism to mine the depths of tradition for material to inspire his colonized countrymen and encourage them to take the future into their own hands. The personage he chooses, curiously enough, is Krishna. Aware of the pitfalls that this choice opens up in his path, he makes a distinction between the Krishna of *kāvya*, which is Jayadeva's Krishna, and the Krishna of the *Gītā*, ostensibly a more serious personage who will fit into Bankim's scheme of writing Indian heroes into existence. The method he follows itself shows that his problems do not end with this division. He went back to the extant material as he had wanted to do — but from them he subtracted all that seemed added or imposed upon the text, "accretions", eschewed the supernatural, and finally got rid of the material he felt was "otherwise untrue". After this bowdlerization — Bankimization — of Krishna, there emerged a hero his devotees would not have recognized. For, Bankim's purpose was not only didactic, it was also competitive — by these means, he created a humanist hero who he claimed was the ideal man, and asserted that the Hindu ideal was greater than the Christian one because in him, all the human characteristics reach a climax (ibid. 4/7). This enterprise is interesting for a number of reasons. Whose concept of history was Bankim following? It certainly wasn't *itihāsa* that led him to this task — so was he aiming to create *kāvya* or was it a historical account that he had in mind? The answer that he gives favours history, raising the problem of whether Krishna was a historical personage at all, and this issue may be debated right down to the context of the present times, when the truth of Krishna and/or Rama are matters of life, death and national importance. But that is not our line of enquiry, anyway. We must ask, rather, on the basis of what authority did Bankim decide which Krishna was more authentic for the nationalist ideal that he wished to create on borrowed bases? Strangely, Bankim can garner support for his doctoring of the Krishna figure from unexpected quarters — Ānandavardhana's theory of *aucitya*¹⁸ supports the selective use of material in the writing of the *itivyūta*. In case the material does not conform to the writer's aims — in other words if the *sthāyibhāva* the writer wishes to express is not enhanced by the received material — then the writer is free to adapt the material to conform to his aims: in this lies *aucitya*. Bankim's aim being to present Krishna as a liberal rationalist national hero, he relies heavily on this concept of *aucitya* — but this is permissible only if he perceives his text as *kāvya*, which he clearly does not. On the other hand,

Ānandavardhana himself will oppose Bankim's project on the grounds that he rationalized a divinity — according to him, *divya* and *manuṣya* attributes may not be mingled, generally (ibid.). Only when there is support in legends for the god-like abilities of a popular king, only if popular oratures tell of the king's divine strengths, may this mingling be permitted without offence to the criterion of *aucitya*. On these terms, where does Bankim stand? Does he wish the reader to believe in the historical existence of Krishna? Does he wish to present him as a god or as a man? How does he square his rationalist stance with doing exactly what he has criticized, i.e., singing the praises of the divine, however he may try to idealize the cause for which this is done? And finally, is Bankim writing *charit* with its base in *kāvya*, or biography, with its base in history? Classical literature has seen cases of departure from the traditional material to maintain *aucitya* in the case of *carita kāvya* — Bhavabhūti's *Mahāvīracarita*¹⁹, which differs from Vālmiki's Rama matter, and the same writer's *Uttararāmcārīta*²⁰ which privileges the *ojas* of Bhavabhūti's Gauḍīya rīti as opposed to the *karuṇa rasa* of Vālmiki. There is also the instance of Śrīharṣa's *Naiṣadhacarita*²¹, where the story of Nala, who loses all in the game of dice, is taken from the *Mahābhārata*. Śrīharṣa's aim, however, is the evocation of *madhura rasa*, unlike the original source — hence, his work ends with the union of Nala and Damayantī. It appears that in the business of writing a *charit*, Bankim could have used these elements that existed in his own tradition — but he chose to write history, thereby giving rise to a flood of questions, about his aims and methods, given the philosophical bases of his project.

Thus far, the *charit* seems to be defined as the account of the exploits of individuals or groups; these exploits may be the fruit of the writer's own imagination, or they may be reworkings of extant material, whether from the popular traditions or in earlier texts. This material is not history however — it is ordered on the principles of *aucitya*, conforming with the aim of the writer. Hence it cannot be called biography; rather it is *kāvya*. The difference between Bhavabhūti's Rāma and Bankim's Krishna seems to be that the former is created out of extant material following literary methods, for the purpose of *kāvya*, while the latter uses the same kind of material, and unconsciously, the same methods, but professes to create truth rather than *kāvya*. It may be pointed out that Bankim's aim and his context are different from Bhavabhūti's. He wishes to set an example; and, in the time that he was writing, the reign

of reason far outweighed that of faith. We may address each of these arguments from within the body of *charit* literature itself.

To take the question of aim, the writers of the Bhakti tradition had precisely the same aim, except that Bankim was trying to deify an abstract concept and construct its ideals, while the Bhakti writers were pronouncing the godhood of palpable human images. Tulsidas's *Ram-charitmanas* is a case in point. Tulsi's work is *nana puranigamagam sammat*²² — the authorities of tradition have been called upon to authenticate the project that Tulsi has taken up. He is like a swan who chooses the pearls from the vast ocean of *Ramcharit* and presents them to the reader. His is indeed an interested version — the attribute-less or *nirgun rup* of Rāma is easy enough to grasp — but no one knows the *sagun* form. To rescue the devotees and even the saints from the misconceptions about this *sagun* form, Tulsi feels the need to write his text (*ibid. Uttarkand*). It is the establishment of a god in concrete form meant for the contemplation of a large section of common devotees that this becomes necessary. The rejection of the abstract philosophizing and the emphasis on prayer or the chanting of the *naam* are elements that characterize the new religious path that is populist as opposed to elitist — it is to reinforce this path, to establish the godhead and at the same time relate the figure of the divine to a living being, that Tulsi deems it necessary to tell the story of Rāma — a *kathā* that he himself as a devotee has been moved by, and wishes to share. There are precedents for this — Aśvaghōṣa's work, the *caritra kavyā* of the Jains, all had particular teachings to impart, but they did it through literary representations of their central characters. This gave them the allowance that Ānandavardhana indicated, to mould traditional material to their ends. The difference between the *carita* texts written in the Sanskrit tradition and those written in the Buddhist or Jain tradition seems to be that the former are exploits, real or imaginary, of kings or princes — they do not have any purpose apart from the creation of *rasa* through the rules of *kāvya*. The latter, on the other hand, have a didactic purpose as well as a purpose that relates to persons who either existed or whose existence the texts intend to prove. It is their *caritra* or *ācaraṇa* that is crucial in this group of texts. The attributes of the central character have ideological importance — it is on this basis that Buddhism and Jainism differentiated themselves from mainstream Hinduism. A similar effort was put into Tulsi's or other Bhakti writers' works, and for a similar purpose. Following this line of reasoning, Trailokyanath's *Damaru* fits into the tradition of the Sanskrit texts, while Bankim, no doubt under

the influence of the very order that he wishes to produce intellectual opposition to, professes to write history. The defence that may be raised in favour of Bankim's project is, of course, that no one would really subscribe to the dated techniques used by Tulsi or by Krishnadas Kaviraj in *Chaitanya Charitamrita* in the time when Bankim was writing. The interrogation of this excuse comes from within the canon of *charit sahitya* itself, and that too from a text written much later than Bankim's *Krishna Charitra*.

Satinath Bhaduri's *Dhorai Charit Manas*²³ not only interrogates the view that Bankim could have got no purchase from using the techniques of the older didactic *charit* texts for his purely political purpose; it also questions the nature of Bankim's reformist didacticism. Satinath's narrative is a *charit* of the poor Tatma Dhorai and his community and their politicization through the movement led by Gandhi. This is done by casting the narrative of Dhorai in the mould of the *Ramcharitmanas*, which is both a model for the formal plan of the text as well as the standard of values that the characters who inhabit the text live by. Tulsi's Rāma is, for Dhorai and his community, an eminently real character whose own trials and troubles seem reflected in the lives of common people. The language of the *Ramcharit* is part of their speech, its verses quoted to express their own views and feelings. For all that Rāma is a king and a god, he is also a saviour and a man, a part of the reality of the lives of the poor and untouchable and landless, in a way Bankim's Krishna can never be. In a sense, if we still need a counter to measure the effectiveness of Tulsi's *charit* in comparison with that of Bankim, this text may provide such a counter. But this it does indirectly — the chief focus of the text is the merging of the place of Rāma in the lives of the dispossessed with the place that came to be occupied by Gandhi, a place described by the community's perception of the latter as an avatar of the former. Apparently the bourgeois reformist ideal of humanism that Bankim described to uphold through Krishna does not compare with the strategy that Gandhi used with the same end in view. In that sense, this marks the structuring of a complicated and novel political ideal into a semiotic system that is accessible and intelligible to the people towards whom it is directed. And this enterprise is documented in Satinath's narrative, which otherwise opens up the limits of the *charit* as well, by allowing it to be a narrative of the life of a commoner, in fact of the most common of commoners, under the influence of greater personae, particularly of one who gains currency through another *charit* text and another whose strategy for achieving

this same end is based on that same *charit* text. And just as all the *charit* texts, both old and new have done, Satinath's *charit* text also interrogates the nature of reality constructed as objective and empirical, not in the satirical style of Bankim's other *charit* text *Muchiram Gurer Jiban Charit*²⁴, but by foregrounding the close interweaving of what may be called 'sensual' reality with imaginative reality. The presence of Rāma is real to Dhorai and his community — this is one reason why Gandhi is deified as well as effective in providing a focus for the political movement. The palpable presence of the divine in the lives of these people, influenced as they are by the *Ramcharit*, may well be rejected as unreal or as superstition — but facts do not support this rejection, and the greatest proof of this would be the process of Gandhi's rise as a political force in the countryside, which the text records. This expanded concept of the 'real' is completely different from the 'real' as perceived in the tradition of the Western narrative. Its functioning is different from the usual weapon that is deployed in the Western tradition itself to interrogate a view of reality taken from the perspective of the dominant class/gender position: the weapon of satire. Bankim's *Muchiram Gur* in fact uses the same weapon to uncover the corruption of the Indian babus in the colonial administrative service. The narrator is at great pains to conform to his original preface which states, "This does not profile any real person, it is a picture of society, contemporary Bengali society in particular", by admitting that he is not omniscient. He records things that he does not know, but what he does know and wishes to point up is exaggerated to such an extent that it seems to reverberate down the ages in its clash with the idea of the real, and find an echo in the text of Trailokyanath. Bankim has no precedents for conceiving of the *charit*-as- satire. His method in this case is as imported as his aims were in the case of his earlier *charit*. And the liberal humanist rationalist position that underlay both the texts may well be open to question by other *charit*-texts in the Indian canon, as we have seen. Using the rules of one country in the service of the philosophy and categories of another was certainly not a problem that Bankim alone faced. In fact for him, as for a large number of us, this has still to be perceived as a problem. And that returns us to the beginning.

When contemporary writers name their texts *Hansulibanker Upakatha* or *Putulnacher Itikatha*, is there an indication in the choice of nomenclature, that the critical apparatus that the writer would want his text to be approached with should be indigenous, as the text-names themselves are? Even if this seems a bit of wishful thinking, this demand

can certainly be made by practitioners of criticism except that it has also to be fulfilled by those who make the demand. As for the *charit*, we may say that it is the literary representation (in the literal sense, to proliferate a pun) of the lives and deeds of either persons or groups, noble or common, created out of the writer's imagination, or created through selection and arrangement from extant material, which may be earlier literature or popular tradition or even *itihāsa*, though not history, according to the rules of *kāvya*. As for its claims to generic unity, like all categories, time and context always mean a reinterpretation and reformulation of the *charit* as well. Hence rather than fixing categories which are built on water, we might investigate the ways in which materials are fused together to form certain texts under the rubric of a particular narrative-name. This may well allow us to explore the possibilities within our own literary system instead of either stringently applying the rules of classical Indian critical canons or using imported tools — neither seem to do justice to what Buddhadeva Bose calls the “core-truth” when he says, in the Preface to his interpretation of the *Mahabharata*:

I have not rejected as irrational what to our modern intellects is fantastic and what the sharpest intellects of yore believed to be possible. Rather, I have tried to search for the core-truth within these extra-real mysteries.²⁵

The search for this “core-truth” in literature and in critical orientation is the legacy that Comparative Indian Literary methodology brings to its task.

NOTES

1. Bhubanchandra Mukhopadhyay, “Noveler Nayika”, in *Janmabhoomi*, Vol. IX, no. ix (Jyaishta, 1308), pp. 324-5. Recorded in Subha Chakraborty Dasgupta, *A Bibliography of Reception: World Literature in Bengali Periodicals 1800-1900*, DSA Monographs in Comparative Literature, Jadavpur University: 1990, pp. 112-3. Referred to henceforth by author's name and publication date.

2. Kālidāsa, *Meghadūta*, “Pūrvamegha”: 30.

3. *Mahābharata*, “Ādi Parva”; Adhayāya 1.

4. The text referred to here is Aśvaghōṣa's *Buddhacarita*.

5. See, for example Mohini Mohan Chattopadhyay, “Sahitya”, in *Bharati O Balak* Vol. XVI (Bhadra, 1299), pp. 532-6, cited in Chakraborty Dasgupta (1990), p. 96, or

Debendrabijay Basu, "Bangla Upanyaser Biseshatva" in *Nabyabharat*, Vol. XII, no. iv (Sr van, 1301), pp. 179-90, cited ibid. p. 116.

6. A comparison between what is permitted by the Muse and what is permissible to Saraswati is made by Dwijendranath Tagore, "Aryami evam Sabhyata" in *Tattvabodhini Patrika*, Kālpa XII, Part IV, no. 566 (Aswin, Sakabda 1812), pp. 101-18.

7. For a detailed account of this exchange, see S.K. De, *Some Problems in Sanskrit Poetics* (Calcutta: Firma KLM, 1959), pp. 65-72; Bhāmaha, in *Bhāmaha Alaṅkāra* refers to these distinctions in i. 27, 28 and the half-verse in i. 29; Daṇḍin's *Kāvyādarśa* where in chapter 1, under Mārga-vibhāga, he talks of these different types of narratives.

8. Daṇḍin, *Daśakumāracarita*, ed. J. Ryder, (Bombay: Jaico, 1967).

9. Whether 'predecessor' is the proper term, given the cloud surrounding the date of these writers, see S.K. De, *Sanskrit Poetics*, Vol. I (Calcutta: Firma KLM, 1960), pp. 57-9.

10. *Amarakosa* 11/6/5.

11. Trāilokyanath Mukhopadhyay, *Damaru Charit*, first published in 1923. The edition used here is Vol. I of Basumati Granthavali series.

12. Viśvanātha, *Sāhityadarpaṇa*, ch. 6, verses 567-8, in the *karika*.

13. Aśvaghoṣa, *Buddhacarita*.

14. Aśvaghoṣa, *Saudarānanda*, trans. Murarimohan Sen, *Sanskrit Sahitya Sambhar*, Vol. 1, eds. S. Chaki, T. Bhattacharya et al.

15. See, for example the different interpretations of Bharata's ideas of 'prakhyāta' and 'kalpya', by later commentators like Dhanañjaya, Rāmacandra, Guṇacandra and Śāgaranandin.

16. Devipada Bhattacharya, *Bangla Charitsahitya* (Calcutta: Suprakash, 1317).

17. Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, "Banglar Itihas" in *Bangadarshan*, 1281.

18. Ānandavardhana, *Dhvanyāloka*, III, 8-14.

19. Bhavabhūti, *Mahāvīracarita*, ed. P.G. Bhandarkar (Bombay, 1905).

20. Bhavabhūti, *Uttararāmcarita*, trans. M. Sen (*Sanskrit Sahitya Sambhar*, Vol. 6)

21. Śrīharṣa, *Naiṣadhacarita*, trans. K. Das (*Sanskrit Sahitya Sambhar*, Vol. 14).

22. Tulsidas, *Ramcharitmanas*, Baalkand, 7.

23. Satinath Bhaduri, *Dhorai Charit Manas*, Part I (1350) and Part II (1372). Edition used in the text is Calcutta: Bengal Publishers 1388 (1979).

24. Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, *Muchiram Gurer Jiban Charit*, written in 1887.

25. Buddhadeva Bose, *Mahabharater Katha* (Calcutta: M.C. Sarkar & Sons Pvt. Ltd., 1381). The edition used here is the third one published, 1382, pp. 7-8.

A READING OF CHHA MANA ATHA GUNTHA

Amiya Dev

I have read this Oriya classic in a Bengali translation, though with my passive bilingualism I could have also read it, or read the most part of it, in the original if it were transliterated into the Bengali script. What strikes me most about this novel is its quality of narration. The narrated or the 'fabula' seems simple, the story of a rapacious creature who only knows how to grab, a wretch that drives everybody to desperation and death himself dying without any tears in any quarters. It could have been a moral tale, but the text is far from that. Of course as a transcript of early nineteenth century rural India where the land-owner and money-lender's law was supreme and where the newly established British law only cast a long shadow, it is unforgettable. And also of course as a roll of characters, a veritable cross-section of rural society it is fascinating. Yet it is much more. I see this extra excellence in the narration itself, in the strategies by which the so-called 'sujet' is supported. The text is charged with banter and innuendoes, with saws and proverbs, with sundry allusions — some topical some traditional — with occasional compositions which only have a marginal relation to the subject at hand. And all this is for the reader whose primary interest is in the tale itself, for the narratee by definition. He would have still been a narratee if all this were not there. But a difference is made by their being there — from an absentee he is as it were turned into a presence. And the reading becomes an act of participation — not coursing the tale alone but tasting word clusters of various other imports. In other words, the narratee becomes an adult capable of appreciating all intelfection along with the delectation of the tale. This conferment of adulthood on the narratee is a sure achievement, perhaps one that goes with the genre novel. But first let me take a look at what happens to the narrator corresponding to the shift in the narratee.

All narratives by definition have a narrator whether or not his presence is registered. In most cases it is not — in most cases he is a matter of inference. Of course there are cases where the narrator is himself part of the narrative, as either the protagonist persona or the persona of an associate or as that of a minor character who has access to the events. We often speak of such narrator's narration as I-narration or as perspective narration. But even within the pale of the predominant kind, the so-called omniscient narration, there are cases where the narrator's

presence is most obvious, in the form of his intermittent voice. This intermittence is sometimes called authorial intrusion, though intrusion is not a very happy word — it implies a violation of the norm which is not the case. What we really have is the creation of a new norm. The narrator makes the reader-narratee understand that he is not merely telling him a tale but is also holding a discourse with him. He is asking the reader to sit back and look critically at the events instead of gobbling them up. He may not be himself making a critique in the ordinary sense, but the crispness of tone and witticisms and banter are suggestive enough. *Chha Mana Atha Guntha* is a classic instance of this discourse. You open at any page and read a few lines, you will hear it. Read further and you will hear it again. And then as you read on you will realize that it is not really a matter of intermittence but built into the very fabric of the narration. The two voices, the omniscient absolute narrator's and the narrator's own in the flesh, are so intertwined that they are not easy to distinguish. However, there are moments when the latter rings out and you are astounded by its rhetoric. May I, to begin with, remind you of the first two sentences of the last paragraph of the first chapter (pardon the twice-removed rough rendering from Maitri Sukla's very readable Bengali translation: "Alas, alas, it is indeed not strange that the descendants of those villifiers who had put Christ on the cross and sent that paragon of chastity Sita to the forest, should carry on this defamation of our Ekadasi-observing benevolent Mangaraja. We are forced to telling here what the villifiers would tell around." And a little earlier, almost at the outset of the text, apropos of Mangaraja's quite suspect Ekadasi fasts: "Where is the eye witness that the emptying of the milk pot was done by Mangaraja? We are not at all ready to accept hearsay or supposition for proof. Such is also the view of lawcourt judges. Besides science says that all liquid matter evaporates away. Now milk is a liquid; are you going to discard science because this milk belonged to the landlord's household? Also there were rats, mice, etc in that room and in whose house don't you have bed bugs, mosquitoes and flies? All the creatures of this world are going about for their belly's sake. Besides they have not listened to the pious book of god-like Mangaraja. In this state of affairs we consider it a cardinal sin to doubt Mangaraja's religious devotion." Or in chapter two, on Mangaraja's early life: "No famous man's life in this world is devoid of miracles. To write all that down will need a lot of paper and pen, a lot of time. But from Mr Mangaraja we have taken the cue that economy is a great virtue. We have thus conceived the essence of the advice which the great

scholar Benjamin Franklin gave on economics. It is easy to buy paper from the market but it is very hard to use it. We will try to maintain the glory of Mangarajan economics by writing everything exactly and correctly.” Or, or, or — I can go on quoting, in fact scan the whole length of the text in appreciation of the discourse held by the narrator. But let me desist for the present and instead reflect on the quality of the discourse.

In a number of places the narrator addresses the reader as “Mr Reader”, “Honourable Reader”, “Honourable English-educated Reader”, and so on. These words are obviously not innocent. The reader is urban and is as such a little distanced from the rural society that is depicted in the text. But by no means can he be so alienated as to be totally deaf to rural life in itself. That would indeed be presumptuous and it is such presumptuousness that the narrator seems to be hitting at. The narrator also seems to be hitting at the blind adoration that is latent in the reader towards everything English whether mores or views or the so-called scientific outlook which often yields absurdities in the name of anthropology or history with regard to things nearer home. There is such crisp banter in his tone that his position vis-a-vis the Oriya (or Indian) *bhadralok* of the Macaulay manoeuvred genealogy is unmistakable. This is particularly pitched in his comments on the supposed power and glory of the English language in the shadow of which, he says, he is writing his Oriya text. The reader must be used to reading English; for reading Oriya he may have to make a little effort. And speaking of language Sanskrit comes up again and again and once or twice Persian which was the language of judiciary and administration before English. The narrator reminds his reader that Sanskrit is now in a bad way because the English call it a dead language. Yet his discourse is quite lined with Sanskrit quotations, not from Manu and Cāṇakya and other social- moral philosophers alone but from Kālidāsa as well. But quite obviously these quotations have an intertextual function. When in police custody the protagonist is approached by a lawyer whose only interest is in fleecing him but who has to do it under the cover of fellow-feeling and benevolence, the narrator plays with the second line of the Cāṇakya śloka, “rājadvāre śmaśāne ca ya tiṣṭhati sa vāndhavaḥ” — plays with because his purpose is not hermeneutics but travesty. Similarly when describing the supposed beauty of the surrogate heroine of the text, the maid Champa without whom the *chha mana atha guntha* land grabbing plan would not have matured, describing no less in the manner of the novel than in that of *kāvya*, the narrator is reminded of

Kālidāsa's classic words from the *Raghuvamśa* opening, "athavā kṛtavāgdvāre vaṃśeśmin pūrvasūribhiḥ / maṇau vajrasamutkīrṇe sūtrasyavāsti me gatiḥ" — classic also as an archetypal prologue to literary intertextuality. Are the Sanskrit intertexts designed for the purpose of persuading the bhadrakok reader as to the power and glory of their language against those of English which too provides, though mostly as Biblical quotations, some intertexts? Sanskrit learning was still possibly a part of education but it was fast losing to English. The narrator bemoans the fact that Persian had already lost to English.

Of course what gives the discourse its motive force in this regard is its crusade for Oriya. Not only does it persuade that Oriya must be used for all purposes, even for reporting an Englishman's English deposition at the Cuttack Sessions Court, but it also employs a good many Oriya proverbs as intertexts — probably its more frequent intertexts. I am no judge of the raciness added by them, though I surmise that a lot would be. The Indian 'postmodernists' of today may even fall back upon them as an antidote to yesterday's modernism, but that is beside the point. As addressed to the bhadrakok reader whose taste is fairly fine they may be a bit scandalous, but it is that scandal that the discourse is probably aimed at. The bhadrakok reader must be jolted back to his true reality. Though not overtly so, the discourse is at the same time quite patriotic; at one place to speak of the joy caused by something a reference is made to the joy that must have been caused to the East India Company's board of directors by the news of Clive's victory at Plassey. Or a little later, when it is told how the protagonist Mangaraja was on his way to attaining his estate from the Muslim landlord by advancing him a loan, we read: "The historian says that Clive's acquisition of Bengal's governorship from the Emperor of Delhi took so little time that even the transaction of an ass from a seller to a buyer would take more." And speaking of the value of the *chha mana atha guntha* land that has caused so much trouble, the narrator refers to Kohinoor: "It is said that he who possesses the famous gem, Kohinoor has his very line go extinct. Alauddin to Ranjit Singh are its proof; but ever since that gem has become the head jewel of our respected, most honourable, manifestly Lakshmi-in-the-flesh England-residing Empress of India, England's glory has spread over the whole world." Not only is the bhadrakok reader thus indirectly persuaded to have a concern for his country's plight but realize the ridiculousness of his own sense of inferiority, as in the following: "There is much regard for science in this century, the nineteenth. For science is at the root of all progress. Look how fair-com-

plexioned the English are and how dark the Oriyas. The reason for it is that the English have studied science, the Oriyas have not.”

The discourse reaches a height in the Champa chapter. As I said, the narrator problematizes the poetic act of describing the ‘beauty’ of the surrogate heroine. He quotes the supposed literary convention, “The authors are bound by rule to describe the beauty and virtues of the book’s hero-heroine. So we cannot violate the perennial convention.” “But authors too”, he says, “have a fault. Once they get a heroine, they look as if they have got heaven in their hands and forgetting all else they straightaway set about describing her beauty. Look, there are trees, leaves, forests and flowers like mango, jackfruit, pomegranate and melon; by equating Champa’s limbs with them, particular to particular, the description of the beauty can be attained. But these days such ancient description will not do. For English-knowing readers English-fashioned descriptions are needed. The classical Indian poets would call the beautiful woman ‘elephant-gaited’; the English would say, how silly! It cannot be that, only the woman that can trot in the horse’s ‘gallop’ is absolutely beautiful. We fear that as a result of the manner in which English culture is forcing its way into this country like the flood water rolling down Mahanadi on the first day of Ashadh, our newly civilized educated babus would probably propose arrangements for whips and saddles for their own darling ladies. ... There is a new import in this country along with English goods called taste. If you do not keep your eye on that you are undone. You will be taken as uneducated and uncultured. We have got this lesson on witnessing Upendra Bhanja’s misfortune the other day (the reference, we know, is to the *Indradhanu-Bijuli* controversy)...” This is of course part of the contemporary critique of the English-educated Indian babu or bhadralok. Nineteenth century Bengali writing, for instance, is full of it — sketches, broadsides, lampoons, fiction — varieties of discourse in the newly framed literary prose (and often to fill up the pages of the newly established periodicals) some landmarks of which are *Babur Upakhyān* (A babu’s account, 1821), *Kalikata Kamalalay* (Calcutta, abode of wealth, 1823), *Naba Babu Bilas* (Pleasures of a newly made babu, 1825), *Naba Bibi Bilas* (Pleasures of a newly made lady, 1832), *Ekei ki Bale Sabhyata* (Is this called culture, 1854), *Alaler Gharer Dulal* (The Spoilt Child, 1858), *Hutom Pyanchar Naksa* (The big owl’s sketches, 1862), and a good many of Bankim’s essays including “Babu” where in the manner of *Mahābhārata* narration Vaiśampāyana describes to King Janamejaya this new human species: “... O King, listen again. He whose word is one

in thought, ten in speech, hundred in script and thousand in quarrels is babu. Whose might is onefold in hand, tenfold in speech, hundredfold on back and non-existent on actual need is babu. Whose intelligence is confined to books in boyhood, bottles in manhood, wife's hem in old age is babu. Whose personal duty is to the Englishman, preceptor a Brahmoism expert, Veda (scripture) the national newspapers and holy place the "National Theatre" is babu. Who is a Christian to the missionary, a Brahmo to Kesabchandra, a Hindu to his father and an atheist to a Brahmin beggar is babu. Who takes water in his own house, wine in friends', abuses in prostitutes' and get-outs in the sahib master's is babu. Whose distaste is for oil during bath, for his own fingers during meals, and for the mother tongue during conversation is babu. Whose care is for clothes alone, alertness for flattery alone, devotion for wife or mistress alone, and anger for good books alone is doubtless babu. ... O King, those of whom I spoke, would live to believe that by chewing betel, hugging pillows, speaking bilingually and smoking tobacco they would rescue India." But while in most of these texts the critique is quite frontal, in our discourse it is not. In our discourse the critique is quite indirect, maybe because it is designed as a dialogue with the *bhadralok* babu himself. But by being indirect it is not ineffective. In fact in places it seems to achieve more effect than it would have achieved if it were direct. Its seeming mildness pays. Also its narrational situs is worth remembering — how can it assume an absolute role when it is part of the narrator's 'omniscience'?

It is obvious that this discourse should also have a straight literary scope. As writer the narrator may like to tell the reader what fiction writing means and what the reader is to expect from him. That is, he may try to strike up a rapport with the reader. Taken simplistically such rapport seeking may result from a need of orientation that the writer feels the reader should have, in order to appreciate the fiction that he is being offered. One of the classic examples of such rapport seeking is found in *Indulekha* (1889) which is said to be the first full-fledged Malayalam novel. "It is seldom", says its narrator, "that an author who has set himself to the task of composing a story rigidly in accordance with veracity and decorum has occasion to apprehend that any passages in his work will cause heart-burning or give offence. But since this style of composition is a novelty in Malabar, some of my readers may possibly misunderstand the object and design of certain episodes in the book, and I therefore deem it expedient to write a few words by way of explanation." (trans. W. Dumergue, *Matribhumi* edn. ... p. 94). There is

no touch of irony in this statement or in statements like: "When I realized the necessity for writing this chapter, the greatest diffidence was engendered in my mind by the consciousness that I was wholly unequal to the task of portraying the beauties of my heroine; but I see no means of escape, I must do my best." (p. 7). Or: "My readers have in all probability already inferred that the hearts of this gentle pair could not possibly avoid being mutually filled with tender and passionate love; but instead of leaving the matter to inference alone, I think it well to describe here, briefly but clearly, the beginning and progress of Madhavan's courtship, and I therefore venture on a slight digression from my story." (p. 13). There are more such straight "apologies", "explanations" and "exhortations" in *Indulekha*, all without irony which fits well with the circumstances under which the author said he had come to write a novel in Malayalam. It was to fulfil the curiosity of his wife and friends who had no access to English novels that he, after recounting the stories of whatever English fiction he would read to them, finally decided to write something similar to which they would have access. It goes without saying that the rapport seeking as part of the narrator's discourse in *Chha Mana Atha Guntha* is far more complex and loaded with irony. Even a statement like the following quoted out of context may not deceive us: "Reader, Sir, you understand? We are authors, hence omniscient." However, most statements are less obviously simple as the following quotations show: (a) "We wanted to write one thing and have written another. While rowing, boats get pulled away from their destination by the water's currents. But the tough oarsman does not give up the helm. True our pen is going this way and that way, but the basic theme will not go wide of its mark — it will take its course." (b) "You will easily understand [this] if we give brief English translations — in the temple are four village activities performed, [it is] the church (the place of worship), the public library (the general bookstore), the restaurant (the dining hall), the town hall (the Bhagavat house)." (c) "O honourable Reader, our knowledge is paltry, so we are quite unable to recognize them." (d) "When you are told the basic principle of understanding through surmise you will find your way. When you will hear that one is a young princess, you will have to realize that she is very beautiful and has many virtues." (e) "We too are by nature opposed to writing excessively, yet these words are about the hero and the heroine of whatever you call it, a true tale, fantasy, novel, fable, you cannot leave them out." (f) "Caution, English-educated Readers: don't laugh on hearing this history from our Ekadusichandra,

if you do then fifty percent of Marshman and Tod's writings will thin away."

Reading such instances of rapport seeking on the narrator's part with the narratee where the rapport is by no means straight and untortuous one may be reminded of Bankim's fiction. There too the narrator at times calls upon the reader not asking for a simple response as in *Indulekha* by way of orientation. Bankim's reader is quite experienced and it is to his experience that the narrator seems to be appealing. But the text of that appeal is pretty uniform which is not the case with that in *Chha Mana Atha Guntha* where the reader is invested with an unusual variety. This reader is sometimes experienced, and sometimes not, but most often he has pretences to experience. Bankim's fiction reader, unlike the reader of his non-fictional prose, is a bhadralok of a fair amount of taste. A statement like the following goes well with him: "Reader, Sir, have you ever seen 'beauty's glow'? If not seen it, you may have heard of it. Many beautiful women 'light up all sides' with their beauty. It is said that many daughter-in-laws 'light up the house'. At holy Braja and during the Nisumbha battle it was a dark beauty that made everything glow. Has Mr Reader really understood what is meant by 'beauty's glow'? Bimala lit everything with beauty, but was like an oil lamp's glow; a bit low, is in need of oil, else won't blaze, good for a household; live with it, get it cook rice, make beds, fire, but touch it and you will burn up. Tilottama too lit everything with beauty — that was like the glow of a crescent moon; clear, charming, cool; but not meant for a household, not strong enough and shines from afar. Ayesha also lit everything with beauty, but that was like morning sunshine; bright, glowing, yet turns whatever it falls on to smiles. As the lotus in a garden so is Ayesha in this narrative; hence I want her form attainable to Mr Reader's contemplation." Mark the sophistication expected. And this is more or less the tenor of the narrator's words directly addressed to the reader within the framework of omniscient narration in Bankim. In one instance we will be reminded of the Champa chapter, minus perhaps a part of its manifold complexity: "No doubt Mr Reader has curiosity to find out how beautiful Diggaj Gajapati's enchantress Asmani is. Well, I will fulfil his desire. But it will be a matter of great defiance if a novice like me does not follow the way in which authors usually describe women's beauty. Hence I should utter the auspicious words first / O goddess of learning! O lotus-seated one! O lady of the autumn-moon-like face! Lady full of affection for devotees at your white lotus-petal-surpassing feet! Cast upon me the shadow of those

feet; I will describe Asmani's beauty. O creator of large, juicy and long compounds! Give me a place on a side of your toe-nail, I am to describe beauty ... Mother! you have two forms; do not trouble me by riding my shoulder in the form in which you brought boons to Kālidāsa and in the influence of whose spirit *Raghuvamśa*, *Kumārasambhava*, *Meghadūta*, *Śakuntalā* were born, by meditating whose spirit Vālmiki composed the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Bhavabhūti the *Uttaracarita*, Bhāravi the *Kirātārjunīya*; do descend on my shoulder in the form by contemplating which Śrīharṣa wrote *Naiṣadha*, by the grace of whose spirit Bharatchandra described the incomparable beauty of Vidya and enchanted Bengal, by whose grace Dasarathi Roy took birth, the form in which you are still lighting up Battala; I will describe Asmani's beauty." Interestingly a whole chapter, short no doubt, of *Bishabriksha* is titled "Cause for Mr Reader's Anger" beginning in the following way: "Here Mr. Reader will be much irritated. It is customary for narratives that marriage comes at the end; we have set about Kundanandini's marriage in advance. Besides there is the perennial custom that he with whom the heroine is married must be very handsome, endowed with all virtues, and be a heroic person and must be overflowing in love with the heroine. Poor Taracharan surely did not have any of this — for handsomeness he had a copper complexion and a snub nose — his heroism was only expressed to his school's pupils — and on the issue of love I can't say how fondly he was disposed to Kundanandini but he had a bit of affection for a pet monkey." Such seriocomic patches, apart from the other things, make it obvious that Bankim's is the closest comparison to the narrator's discourse in *Chha Mana Atha Guntha*. But in certain respects the latter is more complex and carries a wider range of signification with regard to the bhadrakalok's place in nineteenth century Indian society.

But is this narrator, like Bankim's to an extent, absolutely and unflinchingly sure of the value of whatever he is saying and can thus claim a privilege over the narratee he is addressing? Is his discourse a discourse from above or a discourse on a level? In other words, is he or is he not at times aware that he too is a bhadrakalok like his narratee and subject to a number of foibles? Of course it will be absurd to suggest this to be an echo of the mid-nineteenth-century French poet's perception about his reader, "Hypocrīte lecteur — mon semblable — mon frère". Still a certain degree of fraternity may be argued without which the narrator might turn out to be an absolute moralist. But I would not like to take Fakirmohan for a moralist, if for nothing else, for his fascinating autobiography where he views himself quite unheroically,

without any self-righteousness. If there is any righteousness there it is for the Oriya cause. That narration, the *Atmajibanacharita*, is addressed to fellow Oriyas, more or less of a similar background, bhadraloks who have urban moorings but are not totally alienated from rural life, who still have Sanskrit, maybe even a little Persian, and most of them some Bengali and who have opened up to English but who hold Oriya above all. Not that there are no tensions in the relative valuation of the languages, there are and part of this narrative is an honest account of one such tension but without any bitterness. Fakirmohan's sense of history is so strong that he situates both himself and his readers in history. No moralist, no idealist either — his discourse arises out of that sense of history. *Indulekha* presupposes an agenda: English education, particularly female English education for a liberalization of the tradition-bound psyche. While its liberal hero gets exposed to the three prime centres of liberalism in the country, Madras, Bombay and Calcutta, the liberal heroine overcomes all onslaught of orthodoxy by means of her superior intellectual attainments. In that respect *Indulekha* is a simple romance without much realism which only obtains in its depiction of orthodoxy. And it is only in this latter that the text has a touch of irony, in its more important part none. Bankim too has an agenda, though a much more complex one, but he has also a lot of irony which adds a third dimension to his fiction. I don't think *Chha Mana Atha Guntha* has any agenda except breathing history and it is because of history that its narrator's discourse, the discourse embedded in its omniscient narration, is so complex, so varied and so comprehensive. To my knowledge, which however is very limited, I don't find an exact parallel to this discourse.

This emphasis on discourse is not to undermine mimesis. But I think in the early Indian novel a special function is assigned to discourse, for it is through discourse that its reader is identified and, if needed, moulded. This reader is not the simple auditor of the tale where the only job is to be charmed. He is much more. He will be charmed and yet not charmed. That is, his delectation will in part be a conscious act. He will know that he is dealing with a mimesis with which he may agree or may not. It is the business of the novelist to bring his reader over to his side. As long as he speaks from above, that is, takes his reader for granted, he will put him to sleep and not awaken him to truth. The novel is fiction only by definition, but its main purpose is truth. And that purpose will be defeated if the reader does not recognize its contents. Thus the mimesis needs breaks which are filled up by discourse. The early Indian

novel is in particular need of these breaks and thus of this discourse, for it is a new genre and is as such quite self-conscious. My reading of whatever history of the novel in one or two Indian languages I am familiar with is that gradually this discourse will lessen and that the mimesis itself will turn into some kind of a composite discourse. However, this does not mean that the mimesis as such in *Chha Mana Atha Guntha* is meagre. On the contrary it is exemplary and contains the seed of much of the realism of the later novel. If realism is an unsentimental depiction of life's crassness, if realism is an unameliorated presentation of experience, if realism is fighting back all illusions, and if realism is as objective and adjectiveless a description of life processes as possible, then this text is indeed a classic of realism. There is a starkness about it — and this is also true of the story "Rebati" with which Fakirmohan began his final literary career. One may be reminded of the quality of Premchand's or Manik Bandopadhyay's realism which in a way is the height of realism in the Indian novel.

THE CONCEPT OF CULTURAL IMPERIALISM IN MEDIA THEORY AND LITERARY THEORY

with Specific Reference to the Work of Edward Said and Ngugi Wa Thiong'o

Colleen Roach

Introduction: Personal Trajectory

When I was an undergraduate at the University of Michigan in the late 1960s, I majored in English and Spanish literature. I also took a smattering of courses in French and Italian, with the clear intention of going on for a doctorate in Comparative Literature. However, two things happened which changed my plans: 1) the war in Vietnam; and 2) my frequenting of the graduate student milieu from Comparative Literature.

Like many Americans of my generation, I 'came of age' politically during the Vietnam war period. This was the very beginning of a lifelong politicization process. At the same time that I began to attend 'teach-ins' in Ann Arbor against the war, I also became more familiar with the graduate students in literature. I began to attend 'tertulias', participate in plays put on by the Romance Languages Department, etc. I became aware that I did not really fit in with the people studying Comparative Literature. They struck me as overly sophisticated — 'phony' to use a word then in vogue — and very depoliticized. They were forever imitating European styles, and trekking back and forth between Ann Arbor and Europe. In short, in today's lingo, they were too 'Eurocentric'.

My distaste for the 'depoliticized' nature of the people studying literature was so strong that it carried over to my choice of later studies. When I myself went to Europe and studied at a Latin American Institute in Paris, I deliberately avoided studying the literature of this region, instead opting for more 'political' blocks of courses, in areas as sociology, political science and development. Within this framework, I became interested in the sociology of media and went on to do a doctorate in the Sociology of Communications at the Sorbonne. However, my abiding interest, my true love, has always been literature, and I welcome this opportunity to come back to this area by delivering a lecture here at Jadavpur University's Comparative Literature Department.

I will, first of all, talk about the concept of 'Cultural Imperialism' in media research and some recent rather disturbing trends in this area,

and I will then contrast these developments with the approaches to cultural imperialism in the work of Edward Said and Ngugi Wa Thiong'o. Lastly, I would like to offer a few reflections on the concept of 'resistance' in research and literature.

Media Research and Cultural Imperialism

Since the late 1960s, cultural imperialism has been a very important concept used by researchers particularly interested in international communications. (One of the major areas of interest in this field is North-South inequalities in communications.) The concept of cultural imperialism, whose origins probably go back to the 1950s, had the widest currency in Latin America where the term was often used to denounce U.S. hegemony in the cultural arena. Some of the prominent names in Latin American research associated with this school of research are Antonio Pasquali, Osvaldo Capriles, Luis Ramiro Beltran and Roque Faraone. The writings of Armand Mattelart, a Belgian who lived and worked in Chile for over a decade, were particularly influential during 1970s. The work of Herbert Schiller, an American professor, was also very influential during this period.

The research of this group of writers largely reflected a structural analysis of communications and society that was very much influenced by Marxist writers such as Gramsci, Althusser, and the Frankfurt school. What were some of the contributions of these writers? The following is a brief resume of some of the major points made in this research: 1) they expanded the notion of the "military-industrial complex" (a term coined by Eisenhower in the early 1960s) to include communications, emphasizing the power triad formed by the military, big industry and the communication transnationals; 2) they drew attention to the military origins of much communications technology, such as satellites and computers; and 3) they showed how the Western media (particularly in the U.S.) played a very important role in supporting military intervention in the South.

Studies done during the 1970s and early 1980s documented how TV exports throughout the world were dominated by the United States, and how they paved the way for the economic expansion of the other TNCs (transnational corporations). A great deal of research was also done during this period connecting cultural imperialism to the control over international news exercised by the four Western news agencies (AP, UPI, AFP and Reuters).

The debate on the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO), which has been my topic of specialization, was also very much linked to the Cultural Imperialism school.¹ From the mid- 1970s until well into the 1980s, the countries of the South, within the Non—Aligned Movement and at UNESCO, called for more global equality in international communications. The call for a NWICO ultimately led to the U.S. withdrawal from UNESCO in 1985, followed by that of the U.K. one year later.

Attacks on Cultural Imperialism in Media Studies

Beginning in the early 1980s, a strong counter-attack against the cultural imperialism school made itself felt in the field of communication research. To simplify, there were basically two types of research that were part of the counter-attack. First of all, there were studies that launched a 'frontal attack' on the cultural imperialism school. In one case, a very well known professor in the United States co-authored a study with very dubious 'data' supposedly showing that U.S. TV exports were increasingly counter-balanced by regional imports. I myself criticized this research, in writing, showing that it referred to non-existent data from UNESCO study done in the 1970s. Actually, this type of attack is part and parcel of related argument often advanced by conservative forces in the U.S. academy: academics doing work in the 'cultural imperialism' vein are actually not doing *real* empirical research but rather engaging in politics.²

The second, more insidious attack on cultural imperialism was an outgrowth of the ill effects of postmodernism in the field of communications. Researchers used the work of European writers such as Foucault, Derrida etc. to argue against the theoretical underpinnings of cultural imperialism (e.g. dominant ideology and structural analysis).

Before summarizing the particular arguments of this school, I would point out something I always emphasize with my students back home: concepts, theories and research are not neutral. It is always important to trace the intellectual history of ideas, whether we are talking about the 'information society' concept or whatever. In this case, I would emphasize the *European* origins of postmodernism. In these times when it is not uncommon to hear of the 'recolonization' of the South, the origins of postmodernism should be kept in mind.

In the field of communications, people began borrowing from literary analysis to argue that every mass media or mass cultural product could also be treated like a 'text'. The tools of semiotics were used to advance

the notion of 'polysemic' readings of the mass media. The work of the Australian John Fiske has been particularly influential. Fiske, whose early writings did a commendable job of showing how semiotics could be used to decode the mass media, later positioned himself as a strong critic of the cultural imperialist school.³ The notion of an 'active audience', along with polysemy, became widespread in the writings of this period. In short, the arguments used ran as follows: it is pointless to talk of U.S. cultural imperialism through widespread world viewing of TV shows such as "Dallas", for example, because different people have different readings of such a programme. If there is no *one* meaning to such a show, how can a dominant ideology or cultural imperialism exist?

It is within this context that a particularly objectionable usage of the term "resistance" has come into the literature. It has been argued that not only is there no longer a dominant ideology, but people can actually be "resisting" mass culture in their minds and creating new counter-messages out of the dominant culture. (In passing, it may be noted that some feminist academic circles are racked by similar debates. For example, while some feminist cultural critics find Madonna's work near-pornographic and denigrating to women, others argue that it is actually promoting sexual emancipation for women.)

While some say that postmodernism is actually a spent force, it has done incredible damage to the field of communications. Although 'cultural studies' had eminent forefathers such as Raymond Williams, in U.S. universities those identifying with this term are often followers of postmodernist ideas. And I might add that the stakes in this game are not just ideas. Many, if not most communications departments are heavily influenced by adherents of cultural studies who often deliberately position themselves against researchers working out of a more structuralist political-economy tradition.

My own position in this debate is as follows: while variables such as race, class, gender, and ethnicity certainly influence message reception, this fact does not negate the existence of a dominant ideology operating through mass media messages. The two phenomena can clearly co-exist. I take particular exception to the use of the term "resistance" by this school of research because it represents the co-option of a very political term that has concrete, material reality in situations of revolution or reaction to oppression.⁴ (See below). Moreover, as Herbert Schiller is fond of pointing out, it is very difficult to isolate one discrete cultural product (e.g. a TV show) and analyse its effects, because we

are talking about a “total cultural package”⁵. Oliver Boyd-Barrett, whose work on the history of the Western news agencies played an important role in the NWICO movement, emphasized a factor rarely mentioned in the cultural imperialism debate: reciprocity. Needless to say, with international news, like most Western media products, there has not even been a semblance of reciprocity between the North and the South.⁶

The Work of Edward Said and Ngugi Wa Thiong'o

It is because Edward Said and Ngugi Wa Thiong'o are so direct and forthright in their analysis of cultural imperialism that their work is so refreshing and valuable. That the field of comparative literature has produced works by two very eminent, erudite and eclectic (in the best sense of the term) writers from the South, is a sign that some very good things are happening in this area. On a personal note, I might add that if I had read authors such as Said and Ngugi in my undergraduate days at the University of Michigan, I probably would not have taken a detour of twenty-three years before returning to the field of literature.

The work of both authors is in marked contrast to the trends in media studies outlined above: Said and Ngugi are clearly in the camp of the ‘cultural imperialists’. Their analyses are similar in several different ways, including the following:

1) Both are very clear in asserting that cultural imperialism exists as an historical project. There is no ambiguity about people ‘reading texts’ in different ways that negate the effects of dominant ideology. Although I am certain that both authors are aware of this current of literary theory (assuming that the same sorts of arguments are made as in communications theory) they hardly even bother to address them. One of the only times Said refers to this debate is in the following passage, where he uses it to emphasize his major theme, that is, the primacy of cultural imperialism:

All the energies poured into critical theory, into novel and demystifying theoretical praxes like the new historicism and deconstruction and Marxism, have avoided the major, I would say, determining political horizon of Western Culture, namely imperialism.⁷

2) Both authors emphasize the concept and reality of “resistance”. Here, I am referring not just to some imaginary “resistance” that

reactionary media researchers (“reacting” to the cultural imperialism school) suppose exists in people’s minds, but rather to the real concrete resistance that has combatted colonialism and neocolonialist powers in the Third World. In the following passage, Said even reminds us that the resistance movements against the West have made possible the new ways of interpreting literature:

Reading and interpreting the major metropolitan cultural texts in this newly reformed way could not have been possible without the movements of resistance that occurred everywhere in the peripheries against the empire.⁸

The very methodology of *Culture and Imperialism* is based not just on analysing cultural imperialism in literary texts but also the active resistance imperialism itself generated. This is what Said means by “contrapuntal analysis”:

The point is that contrapuntal reading must take account of both processes, that of imperialism and that of resistance to it, which can be done by extending our reading of the texts to include what was once forcibly excluded. ...In reading a text (Kipling’s *Kim*) one must open it out both to what went into it and to what its author excluded. Each cultural work is a vision of a moment, and we must juxtapose that vision with the various revisions it later provoked — in this case, the nationalist experiences of post-independence India.⁹

In turn, Ngugi’s entire enterprise is also based on reconstructing African cultural history as a history of resistance to cultural imperialism. The very title of his book, *Moving the Centre*, is meant to signify an act of resistance against the dominant Eurocentric cultural vision. Ngugi’s analysis hones in on the particularly damaging effects of Eurocentrism on Third World intellectuals, and its class/gender aspects:

But Eurocentrism is most dangerous to the self-confidence of Third World peoples when it becomes internationalised in their intellectual conception of the universe...Within nearly all nations today the centre is located in the dominant social stratum, a male bourgeois minority.¹⁰

Ngugi's use of the concept of "resistance" thus operates (like that of Said) on two levels: first of all, reminding us of the general resistance that opposed European imperialism, and secondly, its cultural variant. This dual approach (with emphasis, of course, on this second), is evident in the following passages:

The modern world is a product of both European imperialism and of the resistance waged against it by the African, Asian, and South American peoples ...¹¹

But fortunately there is another tradition in African culture. This is a patriotic national tradition developing in resistance and opposition to imperialist-sanctioned African culture. Under colonialism this was a culture which through songs, dances, poetry, drama, spoke of and reflected peoples' real needs as they struggled against appalling working conditions in the settler-occupied farms and in factories or which sang of their hopes as they took up arms against colonial exploitation and political oppression.¹²

Ngugi's emphasis on the "reality of resistance" in African cultural history should also be situated within a particular intellectual context of African historiography. Many African historians have had to emphasize that resistance to colonialism did, in fact, take place precisely because the dominant Eurocentric history essentially characterized African peoples as having passively accepted foreign rule as part of a beneficial social order "for their own good". Against this dominant trend, there even emerged in the late 1960s, a "resistance school of history" summarized by the editor of the UNESCO *General History of Africa*:

In short, virtually every sort of African society resisted, and there was resistance in virtually every region of European advance. We can accept this as a fact which no longer needs elaboration.¹³

3) Another similarity shared by Ngugi and Said is that they clearly situate their work in relation to political and economic realities. That is, questions of 'empire', the IMF, the World Bank, etc. are not absent from their work. Ngugi's preface is forthright in this respect: "... for a full comprehension of the dynamics, dimensions and workings of a society,

any society, the cultural aspects cannot be seen in total isolation from the economic and political ones."¹⁴

4) In addition to literature, both authors also make mention in their work of other aspects of mass culture, notably the power of mass media. In fact, what originally attracted my attention to their writings was the fact that each of them took note of the important challenge to cultural imperialism represented by the movement for a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO).

5) The last similarity shared by both authors is particularly important for the cultural context in which they presently live, that of the United States. Although Said and Ngugi expose the "false universalism" of Eurocentrism, neither is sectarian in his cultural approach. Their promotion of cultural pluralism has probably been motivated, at least partially, by the divisiveness of the multicultural debate in the United States. (The proponents of a more Western approach to culture in the curriculum have been pitted against the supporters of "Afrocentricity" or a "curriculum of inclusion".) Ngugi's preface makes clear this position:

I am an unrepentant universalist. For I believe that while retaining its roots in regional and national individuality, true humanism with its universal reaching out, can flower among the peoples of the earth, rooted as it is in the histories and cultures of the different peoples of the earth.¹⁵

Said ends his book on the same note:

No one today is purely *one* thing. Labels like Indian, or woman, or Muslim, or American are not more than starting points, which if followed into actual experience for only a moment are quickly left behind. Imperialism consolidated the mixture of cultures and identities on a global scale. But its worst and most paradoxical gift was to allow people to believe that they were only, mainly, exclusively, white, or Black, or Western, or Oriental. Yet just as human beings make their own history, they also make their cultures and ethnic identities. No one can deny the persisting continuities of long traditions, sustained habitations, national languages, and cultural geographies, but there seems no reason except fear and prejudice to keep insisting on their separation and distinctiveness, as if that was all human life was about. Survival in fact is about the connections between things ..."¹⁶

Needless to say, with the dangers of communalism in certain sectors of Indian society, the relevance of the 'universalism' message extends well beyond the confines of the United States.

Conclusion: Resistance in African-American Literature

One of the few 'politicized' events in my literature courses in the late 1960s occurred during a class on American writers. In this course, we read Henry James, Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner and James Baldwin. Although some twenty-five years have passed, I still remember what the teacher (a Professor Powers) said in the first class. He stated that we were reading James Baldwin's novels because he was a writer of the same calibre as the other "giants" of American literature. Although the poetic prose of *Giovanni's Room* certainly matches *The Sound and the Fury*, to put a contemporary African-American writer in the same category as Faulkner, Hemingway and James was nonetheless an act of daring even for the 1960s.

Mention of Baldwin allows me to segue into my main point here: the importance of African-American literature. Over the last twenty years what I would call a 'literature of alienation' has been lionized in the United States. Writers such as John Updike and Saul Bellow offer up well-crafted stories of middle-class ennui and existential despair. (The lesser known Anne Beattie and the late Raymond Carver, often referred to as "post-modern" writers, are of the same ilk.) In contrast to this 'literature of alienation', African-American writers have produced what I would call a 'literature of resistance'. An entire generation of African-American women authors such as the Nobel laureate Toni Morrison, Alice Walker and Maya Angelou, all of whom represent a vision not just of survival but also of hope, are finally being given the recognition they deserve. Chapter one of Said's *Culture and Imperialism* begins with a quotation from Morrison that is exemplary of the spirit of resistance found in her work:

Silence from and about the subject was the order of the day. Some of the silences were broken, and some were maintained by authors who lived with and within the policing strategies. What I am interested in are the strategies for breaking it.¹⁷

Walker's book *Possessing the Secret of Joy* (much maligned and misunderstood in the United States) is also all about resistance. One of the sub-themes of the book is a query: what is the "secret of joy" that

Africans are supposed to possess? In the last chapter, literally unfurled from a banner held high, we learn the secret: "*Resistance* is the secret of joy!" That this deeply political message can be penned by so many wonderful writers, living in a country such as the United States, is in itself reason for hope.

NOTES

1. See 1) C. Roach, "The Movement for a New World Information and Communication Order: A Second Wave?", in *Media, Culture and Society*, vol. 12, no. 3 (1990), pp. 283-307; and 2) S. MacBride and C. Roach, "The International Information Order", in *The International Encyclopedia of Communications*, vol. 3 (Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 168-74.

2. See C. Roach, op. cit.

3. See, in particular, J. Fiske, *Television Culture* (New York: Methuen, 1987).

4. In a recent article, James Petras notes how the "politics of language" enters into the debate. He points out that it is precisely one of the "strategies" of Cultural Imperialism to appropriate progressive language, but use it with a different meaning: "Cultural imperialism has developed a dual strategy to counter the Left and establish hegemony. On the one hand, it seeks to corrupt the political language of the Left ... During the 1980s, the Western mass media systematically appropriated basic ideas of the Left, emptied them of their original content and refilled them with a reactionary message." ("Cultural imperialism in the late 20th century", *Third World Resurgence*, no. 37 (September 1993), pp. 28-32).

5. See H. Schiller, *Culture Inc.: The Corporate Take-over of Public Expression* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

6. See O. Boyd-Barrett (with D. Kishan Thussu), "NWIO Strategies and media Imperialism: The Case of Regional News Exchange", in K. Nordenstreng and H. Schiller (eds.), *Beyond National Sovereignty: International Sovereignty in the 1990s* (Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex, 1993), pp. 177-92.

7. E. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993).

8. Said, op. cit., p. 53.

9. Said, op. cit., pp. 66-7.

10. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, *Moving the Centre: The Struggle for Cultural Freedoms* (London: James Currey, 1993), p. xvii.

11. Ngugi, op. cit., p. 4.

12. Ngugi, op. cit., p. 44.

13. A.A. Boahen (ed.), *General History of Africa, VII: Africa Under Colonial Domination, 1880-1935 (abridged edition)* (Paris/London/Berkeley: UNESCO, James Currey, University of California Press, 1990), p. 26.

14. Ngugi, op. cit., pp. xiv-xv.

15. Ngugi, op. cit., p. xvii.

16. Said, op. cit., p. 336.

17. T. Morrison, *Playing in the Dark* (cited in P. Said, op. cit., p. 3).

APPROXIMATING THE 'OTHER': SOME SHAKESPEAREAN RENDERINGS IN INDIAN LANGUAGES

Swapan Majumdar

Shakespeare enjoyed a “literary fortune”¹ in India. Even before his plays were read or performed in this subcontinent, his reputation spread through innumerable mentions made by the British adventurers, not always strictly warranted by compulsiveness of the context. Though in England the eighteenth century was not favourably disposed to Shakespeare, in this tropical exile he was but an inextricable part of the sojourning English social life — a matter of pride and nostalgia. In 1719, we discover his plays in a consignment of religious books arriving at the port of St Georges in Madras. Around 1750, the Old Play House in Calcutta produced his plays on a commercial venture. And by the end of the century, English schools competent only to give instruction in the three R’s began to sprout in all the three major metropolitan towns of the country, with a heavy dose of Shakespearean texts on their syllabus. Play readings and enactment of dramatic scenes from Shakespeare became a regular feature in the school socials. By the 30s of the nineteenth century Indians found themselves familiar enough to mount Shakespeare productions and perform in them. Foundations of a vast Shakespearean empire was thus laid in India without much programmed design. Long before the colonial scheme of educational or cultural expansion was adopted by the British, Indians found a new master of the dramatic art — so different yet so charming. The colonial aftermath only consolidated his place in Indian Literature. Carlyle’s rhetoric has proved prophetic: Shakespeare has outlasted the British Empire in India. In fact, the history of Shakespeare reception in India charts a map altogether different from the imperial one.

Let us admit without much qualms the fact that India discovered her Shakespeare not on the stage but in the classroom. And during the early years of contact, the syllabi were often framed by the concerned teachers and consequently to a large extent depended on their individual preferences. Captain David Lester Richardson, for instance, would insist on a disproportionate weightage on Shakespeare, whether in the liberal Hindu College or in the conservative Hindu Metropolitan College. On the other hand, the missionary institutions preferred to keep him out of their syllabus. The establishment of the three presidency

universities in 1857 may be taken as a watershed for Shakespeare studies in India. The then academics were of the opinion that inclusion of Shakespeare on the curricula had ostensibly widened the study of his plays, but at the cost of depth and insight usually found in the academic exercises of the pre-university days. The artist served only as a second fiddle to the moralist or the visionary in the playwright. But the academic loss was amply compensated for by the interest taken by the theatre. From around the middle of the nineteenth century, the lead was taken up by the stage and for considerations of performances. Since then began an uninterrupted course of textual receptions mainly in two directions: one, through the mediation of Lamb's *Tales*, and the other, by direct translations from Shakespearean texts. Quite naturally, the former outnumbered in production, but the latter overgrew in literary prestige. Initially the interest was in the exotic story-line of the plays, as a result of which retellings became more popular. The rise of proscenium theatrical enterprises, to begin with in Bengal and Maharashtra, necessitated playscript translations. Of these, the comedies seemed to have a priority over the tragedies or the histories, though greater glamour was attributed to the tragedies which received patronage from the elite. But, for the common theatre-going people, who demanded a more direct and intimate relationship between the actors and the audience, the comedies provided a warmer experience. Such adulation continued to grow till the 20s of the present century, when the rising tempo of the national movement passively disrupted it almost up to the time of Independence. Love for the Bard of Avon became confined again to the classroom walls. Another feature that came to the fore during this period was the near divorce between the academic and the theatre worlds. Strikingly enough, the histories did not receive the expected response, maybe for the specificities in them, but they deeply moved the imagination of the Indian playwrights which opened, as it were, the floodgate of historical plays in India. As far as the poems, especially the sonnets are concerned, twentieth century modernism in Indian poetry discovered an essential poet in Shakespeare through the recommendations of poets like Keats and Yeats. And we find a number of major Indian poets involved in the act of translating the sonnets in their respective languages. A check-list compiled by the National Library in 1964, the quater centenary of Shakespeare's birth, records 670 entries of translations, adaptations and retellings from Shakespeare. The language-wise break-up of the entries is as follows:

Ahamiya	15
Bangla	128
Gujarati	34
Hindi	70
Kannada	66
Malayalam	40
Marathi	97
Oriya	7
Panjabi	13
Sanskrit	7
Tamil	83
Telugu	62
Urdu	48 ²

The National Bibliography Division informs me that 90 odd renderings have appeared during the last three decades, of which nearly 66% had been brought out in commemoration of the 400th birth anniversary.

The first endeavour in translating Shakespeare into an Indian language, however, was made as an exercise in language learning by a British civilian, Charles Monckton in the College of Fort William in Calcutta. In 1808, he rendered *The Tempest* into Bengali which unfortunately has not survived the test of time. Nearly four decades later discussing this attempt, W. S. Seton-Karr expressed the anxiety ingrained in the problem "... whether the genius of Shakespeare could reasonably be expected to accommodate itself to the scenes of the east, and whether an [sic] European masterpiece could be comprehended and perhaps imitated by an Asiatic workman."³ This awareness of the cultural difference has compelled most of the Shakespeare translators in India to adapt his plays to the Indian milieu. Many of them, again, did not stop at that; they acted as added artificers, taking these plays almost as take-off points to launch into a world of their own. More frequently than not, Shakespeare's name and the outward frame of the play were retained, it seems, only to earn respectability for their works.

Though Louis Marder's story of Shakespeare's reputation, *His Exits & His Entrances*⁴ displays a lamentable lack of information about the Indian situation, it has to be accepted that Englishmen might not have recognized their Shakespeare in India, even though resemblances are too strong to be rejected. In short, it is exactly what Robert Escarpit calls "Creative Treason"⁵ in inter-cultural confluences.

If we examine the basic motivations behind the Indian renderings of Shakespeare, it goes without saying that initially they were intended for people who did not have access to the English language but were interested in getting to these texts. However, contrary to their expectations the English-knowing people became the chief clients and critics of such enterprises. Analyses of the prefaces reveal that some took to translation "to widen the ken of the people", some "to satisfy the inquisitiveness of the readers"; "pleasing" the readers was almost everybody's goal; "to expose the playwright's view of life" induced some to this activity; very few were eager to show the "dramatic excellences" and fewer still the "high density of poetic rapture" in the plays; some were frank enough to admit that by associating their names with Shakespeare's, they wanted to achieve immortality. It may be mentioned here that the majority of these renderings were meant to be read rather than enacted and not more than 10% had ever had a chance to be produced on stage.

The extent of liberty taken by the adaptors is indeed amazing. Right from 1853, the year of publication of the first Indian dramatic version of a Shakespearean play (Harachandra Ghosh, *Bhanumati Cittavilas / The Merchant of Venice*), down to the end of the second decade of this century, not only the locales or the names of characters have been changed to lend familiarity to the incidents, but new scenes have been incorporated, songs thrust in, motivations of characters mutilated and endings mangled. To give a few examples, in Narayana Betab's *Gorak-hudhanda* (1912), a Urdu version of *The Comedy of Errors*, the scene is set in a coal mine, and a cloak and dagger episode as well as an exploitation interlude with a courtesan are added. An Islamic setting in a Urdu play may be justified on the grounds of localization of a story, but to do so while adapting *A Midsummer Night's Dream* into Bengali (Satischandra Chattopadhyay, *Jahanara*, 1904), beats one's wits. Similarly, defying any norm of adaptation, in quite a few Urdu renderings the characters are transported to West Asia. Perhaps the success depended generally on the innate quality of the recipient theatre. Marathi adaptations of the comedies were far superior to those in other parts of the country because they suited more their traditional theatre. B. R. Pradhan's *Bhrantikrit Chamatkar* (*The Comedy of Errors*, 1870), N. J. Kirtane's *Tempest Natak* (1875), V. M. Mahajani's *Tara Natak* (*Cymbeline*, 1879), *Mohvilasit* (*The Winter's Tale*, 1881) and *Vallabhammaya* (*All's Well that Ends Well*, 1887) are the most famous of these. Even then, the tragedies, in spite of limited literary success, earned

greater prestige since they were undertaken mostly by renowned dramatists like M. G. Kolhatkar and G. B. Deval (*Othellonamak Natak*, 1867; Zunzarrav, 1890 from *Othello*) or G. G. Agarkar, A. S. Barve and G. V. Kanitkar (*Vikarvilasit*, 1883; *Himmatbahadar*, n.d.; *Virsen*, 1883 from *Hamlet*) and performed by histrionic celebrities of the stage like Ganapatrao Joshi or Balvantrao Jog.

Respect for the tragic form, nevertheless, did not deter the Indian disciples of Shakespeare from taking freedom in their renderings. In *Hamlet*, Priam's slaughter is replaced by Asvatthama's, Hecuba's parallel is found in Kripi (G. G. Agarkar, *Vikarvilasit*, 1883). Munshi Mehdi Hasan's *Khune- Nahaq* (1898) lands us in a web of love tangles: Marcellus is in love with Ophelia's friend, who is loved by Horatio's brother. Cornelius's son forces Ophelia to submit to his carnal desires in a churchyard, when he is killed by Hamlet. To make room for such innovations and for a couple of songs, a large part of the soliloquies are expunged as redundant. If comedies were the best in Marathi, Bangla can boast of the best versions of the Shakespearean tragedies. Girischandra Ghosh, Nirendranath Ray and Sachin Sengupta's *Macbeth* (1899, 1952 & 1964), Jyotirindranath Thakur's *Julius Caesar* (1907), *Othello* in Debendranath Basu and Sunilkumar Chattopadhyay's translations (1919 & 1967), Jatindranath Sengupta's *Macbeth* and *Hamlet* (1953), Utpal Datta's *Romeo & Juliet* (1964) may have success in varying degrees, but have all been extremely faithful to the original resisting all temptations of popularity by means of adapting the plays according to local expectations. Extant fragments of a *Macbeth* translation by Rabindranath have enriched the corpus to a great extent. Appearances by Girischandra, Amarendranath Datta and Utpal Datta in the lead male roles and of Tinkari, Tarasundrari and Nilima Das in their opposite roles have made these productions historical landmarks in the annals of the Bengali stage.

Success of a translation, and more so in the case of a drama, does not solely depend on its literary quality, but also on its timing. In India, Shakespeare's advent coincided with the growth of a neo-romantic literature revived as a result of contact with the West on the one hand and resurgence of the tradition on the other. Unequal exposure of the literatures has been responsible for temporal unevenness in Shakespeare's reception in India. But at the same time, the awakening of various spheres of art and literature contributed to his lasting fame in the country.

The translators, if not the adaptors, had the right kind of temper — ability as well as congeniality — to use their inventive powers to express something that was not within the ambit of their inherited tradition and to simultaneously step into the editor's role to interpret the truth of an expression. And in drama, besides literary beauty, the truth is made up of body language and speech expressed synchronizingly. In this respect Shakespeare has ever been a devastating experience for the translators. The unfinished lines throw challenges no less than those with full-blown poetic finesse. To maintain a balance between the spoken words and the unspoken intentions, to retain the similar weightage as was in the original, to effect an equilibrium of expression and eloquence not going beyond the phraseology of the target language sets a tall order for a drama translator. How far should it convey the exotic character of an alien culture and how far should that be homogenized? What is the limit to endocentric interpretation? Doesn't it loosen the structure, in respect of verse — the rhyme pattern? And how about obsolete puns and play on words? Expand or explain within the body of the text or annotate with the help of notes?

Let me choose some instances from one Shakespearcan play: *Macbeth*.

Compound epithets: rump-fed [I.iii.6]; cream-fac'd [V.iii.11].

Phrasal verbs: screw ... courage [I.vii.61]; throw physic to the dogs [V.iii.47].

Improvised idioms: as sparrows eagles, or the hare the lion [I.ii.35]; applaud ... to the very echo [V.iii.53].

Allusions: Golgotha [I.ii.41]; Bellona's bridegroom [I.ii.55];

Belzebub [II.iii.5]; equivocator [II.iii.9, 12];

Gorgon [II.iii.71]; Roman fool [V.viii.1].

Idiomatic/Technical expressions: second cock [II.iii.24]; seeling night [III.ii.46]

Antithesis: Fair is foul, and foul is fair [I.i.11].

Repetition: If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well/It were done quickly [I.vii.1-2].

Double meaning: vault [=wine cellar/coffin cell] [II.iii.98-100].

Irony: I fight/Of treasonous malice [II.iii.126-27]; fellows that were out [IV.iii.183].

Beset with the basic problems of translation in general, drama and then Shakespeare in particular and that too between two distinct cross-cultural systems, an Indian emulator has to swing between transcreation and paraphrasing keeping in mind the kind of audience, spectator or reader one is addressing to. He can hardly afford to be 'authoritative', he can at best be 'interpretative'. The traditional classification of metaphor, paraphrase and imitation made by Dryden in his preface to the translation of Ovid's *Epistles* (1680) and the long line of his followers down to Maymi (1956) seems completely inadequate to acknowledge the complexity of the situation. A translator of a drama is exactly like a producer of a play: he is engaged in a perennial revision of a text in performance. It is not merely a linguistic activity of finding a semantic field meaningful to his readers, his business is to discover a plasticity of action combining verbal and physical expression to establish a composite communication system. Words must be seasoned enough to bear such burden to a convincing experience. Translations of drama, therefore, call for a different parameter of translation altogether. Failing to forge a code and canon for that, perhaps the drama translator's fate as an intermediary between cultures is doomed to be misapprehended. The play, whether an original or a translation, is *the* thing.

The perceptions of the Shakespearean world an Indian gathers from these versions may not be the same as that of an Englishman, but with his forests of Arden and Windsor, the court and the clown, the ideal and the real, the magnanimous and the mean, it is not far away from the world of Kālidāsa. The two share the sphere of Indian poetic imagination between them. The adaptors, retellers and translators have naturalized the 'other' in Shakespeare to an extent where he is the complimentary double of Kālidāsa. Such a cultural approximation is not a meagre accomplishment.

NOTES

1. Anna Balakian, "Influence and Literary Fortune: the equivocal junction of two methods", *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature* 11 (1962), pp. 24-31.

2. *Shakespeare in India* (Calcutta: National Library, 1964), p. 11.

3. W.S. Seton-Kerr, "College of Fort William", *Calcutta Review*, V, 9 (Jan-Mar 1846), p. 104.

4. Louis Marder, *His Exits & His Entrances* (London: John Murray, 1964), p. 359.

5. Robert Escarpit, " 'Creative Treason' as a Key to Literature", *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature* 10 (1961), p. 20: "The author is certainly betrayed

by such a practice, but the betrayal gives him or rather his work a new lease of life. ... Instead of being a spectacular piece of carving, it is almost always content with being an infinity of subtle warpings and minute shiftings which add up to a complete metamorphosis of the original work but still preserve its individuality.*

NOTE

MASKS OF IMPERIALISM: RESISTANCE AND OPPOSITION

Marx has noted that the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas. These ideas compromise the “ideal expression” of the ruling material relationships of that class. Marx’s views on the interests of the dominant groups in society forms, generally, the basis of Antonio Gramsci’s theory of *hegemony* which gives the most thorough-going understanding of how a ruling group exercises and sustains domination through consent and persuasion. In other words, the ideas of the ruling class are not directly imposed through coercion over subordinate groups but permeated in society through a consensus of subordinate will in order to appear legitimate and normal.

In his recent book *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said treats culture as a vehicle for the imperialist venture rather than an area of art and learning alone.* Following Gramscian parameters by treating culture as an instrument of political control, *Culture and Imperialism* has the ambitious scope of defining the patterns of relationships between the Western world and its overseas territories. Spurred by American forays into imperialism, Said takes the reader through two hundred years of narrative history with a view to highlight the unconscious imperial attitudes that underline the narratives of those writers scarcely associated with the governance of ‘others’. Connecting Conrad and Jane Austen, for instance, with this enterprise, Said holds them culpable of depicting native peoples as “marginally visible” and “people without History”. It is in the very omission of the salient fact of imperialism that much English literature from *Jane Eyre*, *Vanity Fair* and *Great Expectations* to Raymond Williams’s *Culture and Society* assumes its character. For Said, Conrad may be deeply anti-imperialist, but he is also an author who believes with equal conviction that Africa or South America could never have had a history or culture independent of their Western masters. Earlier, *Robinson Crusoe* introduced to English gentry the founder of a new world and Defoe’s *Captain Singleton*, less explicitly but surely, related to the annexation of riches and lands abroad. Less directly, Fielding, Richardson, Smolett and Sterne did the same. Indeed, the English cultural forms like the novel and the opera served as important cultural affiliations within England, yet, unconsciously per-

* Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, London : Chatto 1993.

haps, ignored the presence of an area outside “felt vaguely and ineptly to be out there” instead of, as a body of humanistic ideas, preventing the acceleration of imperial powers.

We are now reasonably well aware of Said’s definition of Orientalism as a Western reading of the Orient that distinguishes the East from the West. Said has argued that the epistemological and ontological categories employed support a relationship of domination and authority. Further, he claims that the Orient is consistent in its attitudes, behaviour and patterns of living; the mind of its people is imagined to be static and their thinking as “others” is believed to be vastly inferior to that of the West. The quintessence of the Orient is seen in its sensuality and passivity, and this view has endured. Not many European travellers, pilgrims, scholars or academics have disagreed widely with this Oriental “truth”.

Said has emphasized that the creation of Orientalist stereotypes was part of the intellectual exercise that strategically made colonialism possible and legitimized it. The Orient, correspondingly, has been characterized by a variety of essentialist characteristics that vary with the trends of foreign governance. In the interest of colonialism, the Orient was a creation which played a vital role in constituting the differing religious, political and aesthetic positions of European imperialists. For those legitimizing colonialism as a channel of advancement, imperialism was the pre-requisite to progress and an antidote to feudalism. As Ashis Nandy writes:

Not only the arch-conservatives and the apologists of colonialism were convinced that one day their cultural mission would be complete and the barbarians would become civilized; even the radical critics of Western society were convinced that colonialism was a necessary stage of maturation for some societies.

From within this perspective, academic Orientalism can be interpreted in the light of Said’s hypothesis which does not accept the study of the Orient as the only motive of the Orientalist. In other words, there is a link between scholarship and power since Orientalism, in Said’s terms, is not simply a romantic discipline for disinterested seekers. Logically then, Sir William Jones’s conscious and magnanimous intention of trying to lay foundations for the inherent translatability of cultures must conceal an unconscious desire to expose the Orient to the West in terms

that establish advantage over the natives. Jones's continual emphasis on learning Sanskrit then perhaps arose from his intention to inhibit the authority of the *pandits* who argued their legal battles in Sanskrit which was a linguistic instrument unavailable to the British. In fact, Jones's *A Grammar of the Persian Language* (1771) was designed for East India Company employees in India, where Persian was the diplomatic language until 1837. Along with effecting the awareness of common principles underlying different cultures, Jones's linguistic work was to help make accessible the profits of their academic and mercantile trade in India.

Said is extremely useful in any discussion that brings the role of knowledge and power into the understanding of non-European culture. In general terms, he has done much work to expose the creation of the subject as the "other". The conglomeration of various cultures into a single position facilitates an understanding of counter-strategies of representation. Even though he has not outlined any strategy for circumventing the assumptions of Orientalism, his model is useful in analysing what may be called 'orientalism in reverse'. In other words, Said's argument can be used to explain how the indigenous idioms, fashioned to wrestle with Orientalist assumptions, in fact correspond closely with the Orientalist problematic and often turn out to be relational rather than oppositional categories of Orientalism.

Said is concerned not simply with Asia and Africa but with neo-imperialism of a kind perpetuated by the United States in the guise of a rationalized "world responsibility". Having militarily intervened in the Third World every year between 1945 and 1967, the United States has been extremely active over the decades in imposing "the rule of law", most notably in 1991, when 650,000 US troops travelled 6,000 miles to resist an Iraqi invasion of a US ally. In Richard Barnett's words, "the United States sets rules for Soviet behavior in Cuba, Brazilian behavior in Brazil, Vietnamese behavior in Vietnam. Cold War policy is expressed by a series of directives on such extraterritorial matters as whether Britain may trade with Cuba or whether the government of British Guiana may have a Marxist dentist to run it." What Said, and earlier Chomsky, have noted is the media exercise of "manufacturing consent" so that interventions in Cuba, Nicaragua, Panama, Chile, Guatemala, Salvador and Grenada among others can have mainstream approval and consensus. Said is vociferous in his condemnation of hundreds of thousands of deaths at the hands of a "friendly" government and of American policies (pushed through the United Nations) of

enforcing resolutions for wrongdoing (as in Iraq) when it has in fact keenly supported, with utter inconsistency, similar misbehaviour elsewhere (as in Israel). Present-day American domination can be traced to its sources in the wars with native American Indians, allegorized for instance in Ahab's stubborn quest of Moby Dick. As for cultural hegemony, thought-control is exercised through the American media imperialism which forces even a Saddam Hussein to rely on CNN for his news. American media has built an impression of Iraq as a "brittle" land, with suggestions of Arabic sub-humanity and aridity, only because such beliefs can legitimize killings, bombings and destruction of people who were, it is inferred, deserving of it. But what about giving a thought to Baghdad as the seat of the Abbasid civilization? What of Tigris and Euphrates; Sumer, Babylon, Nineveh, Hammurabi, Assyria and the Mesopotamian Civilization which laid the foundations of modern-day Iraq?

Said questions the obeisance and passivity of intellectuals — much before this subject was to become the theme of his 1993 Reith lectures — who give up their "vocation" for "professionalism" (in Julien Benda's terms). Such intellectuals are accused of brandishing "jargons of an almost unimaginable rebarbateness" like post-modernism, New Historicism, deconstruction and discourse analysis even as Said himself has addressed the agendas of culture and imperialism through these very modes. It is strikingly apparent that Said belongs neither with that category he identifies as "intellectual" because of his position among the post-modern, post-colonial prophets imbued with specialized learning, nor with the "professionals" precisely because of his easy dismissal of critical movements and standing as a "public" critic.

While editing *Culture and Imperialism* can be an uphill task (particularly since Said occasionally takes credit for others' remarks), it is nevertheless an encyclopaedic journey into the varied literatures of domination and exile, passionately argued and beaten out. Quite in contrast to *Orientalism* where Said argued for the Orient as a different cultural sphere, here he ceaselessly endeavours to break the boundaries between "we" and "them" or the "self" and "other", realizing that the "real" Orient is not simply one that is created by an Oriental just as a representation of blacks by a black or a Muslim for Muslims does not bring forth a truer or an unprejudiced account, though this is undoubtedly true for the blacks or Muslims.

It is important to appreciate Said's growing concern with finding alternatives to homogenizing tendencies as long as there is ambiguity

in the representation and definition of a culture. In fact, his new book clearly brings out his optimism that it is not entirely impossible to conceive of a scholarship that neither 'corrupts' history nor is indifferent to human reality. He indicates how post-orientalist historiography should trace third- world identities as relational rather than essentialist, a view from a vantage not external to the actuality of relationships between cultures or from a privileging epistemology centred in unequal relationships, but *within* the actuality, and as participants in it.

Rumina Sethi

T.S. ELIOT AND EDWARD THOMPSON: A FEW LETTERS

The readers of this journal would not need an introduction to Eliot. But it might be useful to say something about Thompson. Edward Thompson's long and enduring connection with India began with his coming to teach in the Methodist Mission school and college at Bankura, Bengal, in 1910. There he remained till 1923 with an interruption for war service in the Mesopotamian English Front. During his years in Bankura his own personal interest in Bengali literature and Nature kept him as much out of the mission compound as he found time for. He met Rabindranath in 1913, having cycled through his favourite country for most of the way from Bankura to Bolpur. Soon enough he launched on a critical study of Rabindranath's life and work. Despite serious breaches of confidence between them, a life-long friendship ensued. Thompson crusaded haplessly for a rightful recognition of Rabindranath's genius in the West. His book on the poet's work did not succeed in doing this. But he maintained his own strong interest in the subject by revising his original study almost up to the time of his death in 1946.

Thompson returned to England in 1923 as Oxford University's first lecturer in Bengali. The position was made for teaching a scant number of ICS probationers, and it was worth little in salary and job satisfaction. But it at least led Thompson to strengthen his ties with India. He continued with Bengali and began to learn Sanskrit. He abandoned the Methodist Mission within a year of his lectureship. Then onwards he moved to his life's work on Rabindranath and India. He visited India thrice in the thirties doing research on his historical book and seeing British Government officials and Indian nationalist leaders. He had close friends among the Indians, Nehru and Sapru and Jayakar in particular. He realized the rift that had come about between them and the British Government.

His work on India led him to enter into the affairs of the Indian Empire. With time he came to be regarded as something of an expert on India among British politicians and among those that were interested in India in a general way. This widened the range of his correspondents. The Thompson Papers now housed in the Bodleian Library of Oxford University contain volumes of letters from many leading men and women of those times. These include a few letters from T.S. Eliot of the years 1930 and 1943. It is obvious from the letters that the correspon-

dence was started by Eliot to seek Thompson's advice for a friend who wanted to publish the translation of a French book on India. As I have said above Thompson was often sought for his advice on things Indian.

What was striking about these few letters is that they contain Eliot's own testimony about his interest in India.

We will now turn to the letters.

68, CLARENCE GATE GARDENS,
REGENTS PARK, N.W. 1.

11 October 1930.

Edward Thompson Esqre.,
Scar Top,
Boar's Hill,
OXFORD.

Dear Mr. Thompson,

I have taken the liberty — assuming that you remember me as a director of Faber & Faber who happens to be particularly interested in India, who had a few words with you, or rather who listened greedily to a few words from you, the other day — of directing towards you one Sir George Curtis K.C.S.I.* who admires your work, who is equally and earnestly interested in India (he is a retired Indian Civil now living in France); and who is anxious to get published either in England or New York a translation of a French book on India (by one André Philip). I met Sir G. Curtis because he is the father of a young friend of mine who is a slum priest in South London, and for whom I have a warm affection. But I was much impressed, on one meeting, with the generous interest of his father, who is really and unselfishly concerned with the well-being of India, and who I think you will find knows well: a few words about a mutual acquaintance, George Lloyd, convinced me of his impartiality; so I hope you will be able to see Curtis either in Oxford or London.

May I take the opportunity of saying that I very much wish to induce you to lunch with me on any visit to London; not because I am one of the publishers of your last book, but because what you said to me about India was so congenial to my own prejudices or intuitions: after all, I have had Indian friends, and my interest in India was enough to make

me spend two or three years, at one more leisured period, in the study of Sanskrit and Pali.

Sincerely yours,

T.S. Eliot

* Sir George Seymour Curtis, 1867-1931; educated at Christ Church, Oxford; entered the Indian Civil Service 1888; retired 1922.

24 RUSSELL SQUARE
LONDON, WC 1

Oct. 14th. 1930.

Edward Thompson Esq.,
Scar Top,
Boar's Hill,
Oxford.

Dear Mr. Thompson,

This morning I have simultaneously your letters of the 12th and 13th. I quite agree with you about the impossibility of your taking over Sir Geoffrey Curtis's responsibility. I could see no reason myself why he should not allow his name to appear, and I daresay that it was merely because of Lloyd's* views. I pointed out to him that if we could not use his own name or Lloyds's or anybody's else, the book would be of little use to us; and I merely sent him on to you because he admired your book and I thought you might give him some sensible advice. And he was very anxious to meet you.

As for the 27th, I should be delighted if we could lunch together on that day, and incidentally it might prevent you from circulating rumours that the week-ends of publishers are longer than those of stockbrokers.

Yours sincerely,

T.S. Eliot

* George Lloyd was a mutual acquaintance of Sir George Seymour Curtis and T.S. Eliot.

24 RUSSELL SQUARE,
LONDON, W.C. 1.

29 August 1941.

Edward Thompson Esqre.,
Saunders Close,
Bledlow,
Aylesbury, Bucks.

Dear Thompson,

I very much hope that the letter you have sent me, or something like it, will be published, and that public attention will be repeatedly drawn to the plight of the political prisoners in India. At the same time I do not think that I ought to sign it, and I want to make clear exactly why. It frequently happens that people sign letters concerning matters in respect of which their opinion carries no weight, but in which their names may for the moment have a specious authority and an undeserved influence. I do not think that a "moral certainty" that a cause is right is, in so serious a matter as signing a public appeal, a justifiable substitute for exact and first-hand knowledge. I cannot see that men of letters as such have any authority in the matter under consideration — when, like E.M. Forster, they have first-hand knowledge of India, the case is different. I always try to confine my signature to letters about matters on which I have direct knowledge, or matters about which no special knowledge is required. I feel that my signing letters about matters on problems about which I cannot speak with authority could only, in the long run, go to discredit my signature and weaken my influence in connexion with matters about which I *can* speak with knowledge as well as with feeling. Therefore my declining to sign a letter cannot be taken as opposition or inertia: if it were the former I should say so; if it were the latter I should either do nothing or sign — for it is much easier to give one's signature than to explain one's reasons for not doing so!

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

T.S.Eliot

* Thompson took a close interest in the then political situation in India and had close friends among the Indian nationalists such as Nehru, Jayakar and Sapru. He was collecting signatures widely for a letter to *The Times* on the subject. Among those he

approached for signature to this letter were E.M. Forster ("I am very reluctant not to sign anything sponsored by yourself, but I feel terribly ignorant about this Indian tragedy and about the best way to ameliorate it, and I don't want to take part in any press statement in consequence", Forster to Thompson dated 28 August 1941, Thompson Papers, Box 3) and Dame Rose Macaulay, an author of English literary criticism as well as a poet.

24 RUSSELL SQUARE,
LONDON, W.C. 1.

14th January 1943.

Edward Thompson Esq.
Saunders Close,
Bledlow,
Aylesbury, Bucks.

Dear Thompson,

I am glad to hear from you that you are going to resume the series of 6d poets* and I am naturally pleased that you should want to include a selection of my own verse. The rights of all my published works are held by Faber & Faber and in order that such a selection might be published it would be necessary to persuade them that it was in their interest, or not against it. Now I cannot myself see, candidly, that Faber & Faber have anything to gain by allowing such a publication. We already publish a small 2s. 6d. selection of my verse in stiff covers and I do feel myself that a 6d. selection would be likely to interfere with this. There might be more reason in the case of a more voluminous writer than myself but I am afraid that I cannot feel that I can recommend the suggestion to the firm or even to myself. I am perfectly sincere in expressing pleasure at the revival of the series but it seems to me to have far more value in the case of dead poets than of those who are living and who do not write very copiously.

With many regrets,

Yours sincerely,

T.S. Eliot

* Edward Thompson had edited some poets in a series called Sixpenny Poets for Ernest Benn Limited (Publishers) in 1927. In 1942 there was an offer from publisher Douglas Jerrold of Eyre and Spottiswoode (Publishers) Limited to Edward Thompson for editing

the series by reissuing them from the existing volumes and to add selections from the living poets. (Douglas Jerrold to Edward Thompson dated 8 December 1942. Thompson Papers, Box 5).

Thompson must have asked Eliot for inclusion of a selection of his poetry in the new series to which the above letter was a response.

Uma DasGupta



BOOK REVIEW

1. Alok Bhalla (ed.), *García Márquez and Latin America*. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1987.

2. Alok Bhalla, *Latin American Writers: A Bibliography with Critical and Biographical Introductions*. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1987.

... Our crucial problem has been a lack of conventional means to render our lives believable. This, my friends, is the crux of our solitude.

Gabriel García Márquez

When an anthology discusses a detective story turned upside down, the reversal of a fairy tale, and a filmmaker turning to his audience in search of a language, it could be addressing a post- modern play of form representing a crisis in meaning itself. Or it could be mapping the contours of a search for meaning within the complex histories of neo-colonial cultures, as does *García Márquez and Latin America*, the first (English language) anthology on the subject to be published in India.

Modern capitalism and a semi-feudal economy made strange bedfellows in Latin America, resulting in simultaneous industrialization and impoverishment, Westernization and indigenization, dictatorship and revolutions, and not surprisingly, a crisis in communication and representation. S.P. Ganguly discusses the dilemma of the Latin American novelist in the face of forces, techniques, technology and modes of communication whose language surpasses him; and he highlights, in the words of Alejo Carpentier, an “anguish created by language between what was to be said and what was known”.

Ganguly also traces the reception of surrealism in Latin American literature which was inspired by the techniques of psychic automation and transcription of dreams, but which also marked a departure from the European focus on the individual psyche. Latin American novelists drew upon the beliefs, myths and legends of the native Americans which according to Miguel Angel Asturias were “magical and primitive”, corresponding to the socio- political, economic and cultural situation of the Latin American “between reality and dream, between real and imaginary, between the real and the invented”, or, as García Márquez

would put it, in a reality so unbridled that “we have had to ask but little of imagination”.

This essay, “Reality as Second Creation in Latin American Novels”, emphasizes the novelization of the very genre of the novel itself that has taken place through intertextual practices of combining both literary genres and various disciplines, and especially through the deconstruction of formulizations that challenges the relevance of traditional forms. The valuable contribution of this author is that without falling into the trap of Western frameworks of theorization on post-modernism, he treats himself firmly within the Latin American context and claims specificity in difference. He establishes that the thrust of innovations in artistic creation is directed not towards a parody of history and identity, but towards an affirmation of the present in the process of reconstructing fabricated “official” chronicles and compounded identities. It is a happy coincidence that Spanish, the language of García Márquez, intertwines the etymology of ‘history’ and ‘story’ in the common term “la historia”, prefiguring, much in the manner of “magical realism” itself, the intertwining of the perceptions of history and story in his works.

Reading *The Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, Manabendra Bandyopadhyay detects his way through “A Detective Story Turned Upside Down: [and asks] Why Did They Not Warn Santiago Nasar?” He shows how the inverted structure of the detective form, rather than facilitating a zeroing in on merely the question of the murderer, actually provides a brilliant strategy for widening out from the crime itself to questioning the values of an entire community, that with its silent complicity, actually sanctions the murder in all its machismo, racism and violence. This essay is an excellent example of how the rift between self and other can be bridged in a non-hegemonic fashion, how a foreign reader can pick up the threads of patterns from *within* the text as a guide to interpreting its connections with the reality beyond.

Jasbir Jain, in turn, reads *Innocent Grendira* as the reversal of a fairy tale. She reads the novella in terms of the conventional fairy tale pattern of fantasy, escape, recovery and consolation, but claims that the last stage is absent here. Even if the freedom and love signified by the traditional “lived happily ever after” ending is substituted here by isolation and despair, as she claims, what one looks for is a rationale for this formal subversion that would explain the organicity of the reversal.

It is extremely unfortunate that many of the contributors to this volume read García Márquez’s writings as essentially pessimistic. García Márquez, quoting William Faulkner’s famous words, “I decline to

accept the end of man", had concluded his Nobel Prize-winning speech asserting belief in the possibility of creating a new utopia of life "where the races condemned to a hundred years of solitude will have, at least and forever, a second opportunity on earth." Eric Rottram, who otherwise compares García Márquez to Faulkner, reads "repetition and stasis" in the cyclical patterns of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, completely ignoring the fact that repetition draws attention to difference in the novel and each cycle marks a change, setting up expectation where there had been none before.

Rottram also chooses to view, through an existential prism, only the solitude of power, of the dictator, circumventing the cultural and sociopolitical solitude of a people *subject* to power. And Alan Kennedy, in a pathological anxiety of theorizing, takes great pains to advertise his knowledge of deconstruction via Derrida and De Man, then proceeds to impose their theoretical grids on *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, claiming that: "I shall be importing some of my Derridean thinking into my reading of Camus, and doing this in order to make better sense of Márquez." His essay finally reveals the 'fallacies' of superficial theoretical impositions, with its ultimate slippage into a sudden straight hermeneutic reading of the famous last sentence of the novel, concluding simply (and simplistically) that no society condemned to one hundred years of solitude has any hope of surviving. It would of course be irrelevant to Kennedy's speculations that while Melquíades' manuscript prophesied that Macondo would be "exiled from the memory of men", García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* has actually immortalized that city of mirages.

And little does it matter that García Márquez had used the most prestigious literary platform in the world to assert that "The interpretation of our reality through patterns not our own serves only to make us ever more unknown, ever less free, ever more solitary."

Keki N. Daruwalla sees hope at the end of the tunnel in Carpentier, but also sees García Márquez's novel, *Autumn of the Patriarch* as a narrative of ultimate "dehumanization, death and destruction" and even "despair". Tejwant Singh Gill (and one wishes he would write more to communicate that to intimidate the reader with an 'obfuscating' vocabulary) argues that García Márquez combines the function of Benjamin's storyteller and the modern novelist by integrating folk perceptions and "preternatural motifs" with the psychological complexities of a contemporary narrative in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. But, while one can hardly disagree with the claim that García Márquez

“awards living immediacy and present force to the storyteller”, it is ironic that when one puts Tejwant Singh Gill’s thesis to a deeper philosophic test, the only counsel that one can see him crediting the storyteller of this novel with is a prophecy of doom, of an “inevitable ending of alienation and dehumanization into dissolution, death and destruction”.

An implicit response to all these interpretations from within this anthology itself would be that of Alok Bhalla: “... what saves us from despair and madness is that there are men [and women] both in the fictional world of the *Autumn of the Patriarch* and in the history of Latin America who are not willing to acquiesce to their victimhood.” And an even more forceful one would be that of Manabendra Bandyopadhyay that these novels, far from glorifying despair, are actually “a powerful indictment of that rotten, decaying, grotesque world”, an indictment that is the labour of love of a writer who writes to transform the world, rather than to wallow in futile resignation.

And the most concrete example of the transformative potential of García Márquez’s novels, also a landmark in the history of literature, is the reappearance of the United Fruit Company massacre in school history books only after *One Hundred Years of Solitude* had nudged the ‘story’ back into public memory, unearthing it from its burial ground beneath the palimpsest of official neo-classical ‘history’.

It is also no mere coincidence that all the critics who either impose superficial frameworks on his novels, or read into them their versions of fatalism and stasis, do not even bother to get his last name right, truncating the García Márquez to Márquez. Most Hispanic individuals have a two-part last name or *apellido*: the first part is the first of their father’s surname, the second is the first part of their mother’s. Thus García Márquez derives the García from his father, and the Márquez from his mother. While scholars in India may be handicapped by a lack of exposure to Hispanic culture and texts, such a ‘mistake’ on the part of critics from North America, where Hispanics are already on the way to becoming the single largest ethnic population, is unfortunate ethnocentrism.

The range of this anthology, though somewhat disparate, nevertheless adds dimension to it. Nissim Ezekiel’s essay on Neruda rightly asserts that the idiom of “contemporary criticism” is grossly inadequate for discussing the concerns of and the reality underlying Neruda’s poetry. However, Ezekiel unquestioningly accepts the hegemony of “the most influential critical schools of our time” in implying uncritically that they

constitute the whole body of contemporary criticism. M.J.N.A. Xavier's study of Aimé Césaire's plays performs the role of a sub-plot in the anthology. It focuses on the stasis versus transformation debate (that characterized the García Márquez essays) and emphasizes the images of hope and rebirth that counterbalance the failure and death of the protagonists.

In the context of the other arts Isaac Sequeira's piece on "The Impact of Latin American Music on North American Music" is extremely informative, while Ashish Rajadhyaksha's "Notes" on Latin American Cinema dealt with the implicit concerns of the entire anthology i.e. imperialism, technology, political struggle and, of course, cinematic language. Discussing the problems that Latin America faces in having to work in a cinematic language built upon Western conceptions of the "Third World", he quotes the Ethiopian filmmaker Haile Gerima to stress that "The history of film ... has left a grotesque scar upon Third World people. ... Film in general has created for all humanity a legacy of false history, false culture, false heroes and heroines that continue to prevail over truth. ..." As a strategic return to the question of "what is to be done", Rajadhyaksha juxtaposes this with the Bolivian filmmaker Jorge Sanjines' philosophy of cinematic communication that could well apply to any politically committed artist: "A film about the people made by an author is not the same as a film made by the people through an author. As the interpreter and translator of the people, such an author becomes their vehicle." A language from below to give voice to a history from below?

Alok Bhalla has made a significant contribution to Hispanic American Studies in India. In addition to the anthology discussed above, he has also edited a useful bibliography of Latin American writers going as far back as Ruben Dario (1867-1916), and ending with Mario Vargas Llosa (1936-). It includes biographical notes on eighteen writers (including five Nobel laureates) that map their literary and political careers, and bibliographies of their works in the original, works in English translation, and selected critical literature on their writings. The name "Latin American" is however a misnomer. It is actually a bibliography of writers from the Hispanic countries, with Brazilian authors and the important body of Portuguese literature finding no representation here. Moreover the only woman listed is Gabriela Mistral. One looks forward to more extensions of this project, including important writers missed out in the period covered here, especially Augusto Roa Bastos, Grueso Sábato and Juan Carlos Onetti (in addition to the ones mentioned in his

preface) and also others who have made major contributions to Latin American literature more recently, such as Luisa Valenzuela, Domitila Barrios, Rigoberta Menchú, Clarice Lispector, Rosario Castellanos, Eduardo Galeano, Antonio Skarmeta and Ariel Dorfman.

Kavita Panjabi

La Littérature Comparée: Une Parole Risquée

Pierre Brunel and Yves Chevrel (eds.), *Précis de la Littérature Comparée*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1989.

Although this collection of articles offers a varied spectrum that allows the reader to perceive the problem that is Comparative Literature from various angles, the core of the collection is a methodological approach to the discipline, that raises, surveys and problematizes certain key concepts: what is a text? who is the reader? what constitutes reading as a practice?

The notion of the text has been, for quite some time, a controversial topic in academic discourse. There have been attempts at establishing a 'meaning' of the text and the plurality of reading is a known, if not a widely accepted, concept. The problematic of the text can be summed up (if a summing up is at all possible) by a citation from Valéry: "Il n'y a pas de vrai sens d'un texte" (A text does not really mean anything). In "Les Études de Reception", by Yves Chevrel, Valéry's words are used to justify a point that *Précis de la Littérature Comparée* as a collection and *Littérature Comparée* as a discourse assert unequivocally: a text can signify anything and everything. It is therefore necessary to ask ourselves, what are the conditions of readability? So far as an answer to the question is concerned, Wellek and Warren's *Theory of Literature* shows a serious reticence in according a prime role to the reader but, paradoxically, ends up insisting that it is a collective ideology that allows the text to exist as intersubjective norms and individual expression through which those norms are actualized. Wellek has cited (and of course criticized) Roman Ingarden, who along Husserlian lines attempts a phenomenological study of literary texts. Ingarden's essential perspective is that a literary work is incomplete by nature and achieves itself through text-reader interaction.

It is here, as M. Chevrel points out, that a comparatist approach to the phenomenon of reception becomes important. One of the aspects that the collection studies is that of the 'Presses Orientalistes de France', its publication of texts "D'étrange pays" (from alien countries). What is interesting and significant about the publication strategy is its homogenizing drive that clubs Serbian and Hungarian within the same bracket and what is more, introduces the writer as "exotique". In the case of this series, the "peritext" (a term of Gerard Genette's, implying

preface, introduction, notes, summaries) plays an important mediating role because it orients the reader in a specific direction.

The reader, of course, is a historical category. Historicity of a text, Hans-Robert Jauss explains, resides in the textual experience of the reader. Reader as a category is explained in the essay by Jauss' "Erwartungshorizont" (horizon of expectations). At this point, a word of caution is added by the author about the Jaussian component of the definition. Over and above the "horizon of expectations", one has also to take into account the degree of attention with which the reader receives the text. The study of reception should also be cautious about political periodization because it does not necessarily take the cultural order into consideration. What has to be explored is not just the present environment of authors because that restricts the temporal space, but the maximum of a certain chronological segment.

The awareness of Comparative Literature in the collection seems to be rooted in the "lecteur" as a dominant category: "Le lecteur est effectivement devenu un véritable héros de la recherche littéraire." (The reader has become the veritable hero of literary research.) M. Chevrel discusses Reinhold Grimm's *Rezeptionsgeschichte* (reception history) where as many as thirty-eight types of readers are enumerated. Besides, the article also mentions Michael Riffaterre's "Archreader", Erwin Wolf's "Interdierter Leser" (target reader) and Wolfgang Iser's "Implizite Leser" (implied reader).

There is also a simultaneous awareness that this terminological profusion is undesirable and it is necessary to come to a consensus: "La prodigalité terminologique est d'autant plus dommageable que chaque théoricien essaie, suivant les ressources de sa propre langue, de forger des expressions dont les référents ne recoupent que partiellement ceux de ses collègues." (The terminological prodigality is damaging to the extent that each theoretician tries to forge according to the available resources of his own language, expressions that only partially cut across those of his colleagues.)

'Reader' in the collection is supplemented by 'Reading' especially when it concerns the knowledge of 'l'étranger'. The chapter "Le Fait Comparatiste" by M. Pierre Brunel concentrates on "étranger", "ailleurs" and "l'autre" as key concepts in the three laws of emergence, flexibility and irradiation. He discusses textual experience as a continuum and refers to Lacan, Jean-Pierre Coquet and, of course, Julia Kristeva. However, M. Brunel prefers "resistance" to "insistance du sens" for, integration of a prior text into a new text creates the possibility

of a new flexibility, but it would be simplistic to think that the assimilation is total. According to him, a new text is born constituted of "éléments étrangers". It is not enough to constitute an intertext by deconstruction- reconstruction that allows "pérmuer des textes, des lambeaux de textes qui ont existé ou existent autour du texte considéré et finalement en lui" (to permute the text, shreds of texts that have existed or exist around the text under consideration and finally the text itself) (Roland Barthes, *Théorie du Texte*). Nor is it sufficient to take recourse to "code gnomique" or "codes culturels" (Barthes, *S/Z*). Reading therefore is in itself a problematic within the field of Comparative Literature which deals not with reading but with readings.

Insofar as a methodology is concerned, there is a tendency in the collection as a whole to autocritique, a mode of balancing and weighing judgements and a conscious drive to defer a conclusion. "Le comparatiste en effet n'a pas seulement vocation à de grandes synthèses. Il peut intervenir, avec le point de vue qui est le sien et avec ses moyens propres, dans l'analyse des textes si du moins ceux-ci s'y prêtent." (The task of the comparatist is not simply one of synthesis. He can intervene, with his own point of view, and his own tools in the analysis of the text when occasion arises.)

What I find significant about the collection and its comparative methodology (one being inseparable from the other) is the demolition of purely 'literary frontiers' and the inclusion of media among other things as an integral part of the discipline. Jeanne-Marie Clerc starts the third section of her exposition with a citation that validates the status of media studies as a part and parcel of cultural discourse: "Il n'y a plus guère de chasses gardées. Nous vivons la civilisation de shaker. On secoue tout et on mélange: les continents, les idées, les moeurs." (from *Lettres Françaises*, 1 Aout, 1960) (There are no longer exclusive games. We live in a civilization that shakes. One grabs everything and mixes them up: continents, ideas, manners.) The article goes on to trace the evolution of ciné-roman in the USA and then in France to explain the sociological inversion that in our times privileges the image over the word:

Car, à l'horizon de l'écriture s'affirme désormais l'image, c'est-à-dire un réel absent, en quelque sorte nié par les artifices auxquels donne lieu sa simulation, et que le texte prend désormais à son compte comme la seule réalité pointée derrière les mots. (Because in the horizon of writing, henceforward, the

image asserts itself. That is to say, a sort of real-absent category negated by the artifices which are replaced by the simulation of the image, something that, henceforward, the text takes into account as the only poignant reality behind words.)

The discussion of *ciné-roman* focuses on the contributions of Alain Resnais, and especially Robbe-Grillet. The author of the article goes on to show how the *ciné-roman* turns into a subversive instrument, destroying not only the primacy of words but also shaking the reader out of his conditioned response that prioritizes the linguistic discourse. She explains how in the *ciné-roman* on the one hand the simple material presentations of the text accentuates a typographical incoherence in an explosion of words and notes. The montage technique confuses the cognitive process that tries to locate the image behind linguistic signs. The linguistic signs on the other hand, far from borrowing from the image the referential spectrum and their mimetic vocation, finds in the functional writing of scenarios an elocutive aspect by the proliferation of detail related to the pragmatic aspect of discourse. Discourse in a *ciné-roman* thus oscillates between two opposed and complementary lexical poles, between 'power' and 'task'.

With the inclusion of *ciné-roman* as a potential area, Comparative Literature acknowledges the end of a culture that privileges writing over all the other socially significant practices.

Venturing into new fields and questioning certain established ones are the two aspects of the methodological approach of the collection. It also questions academic complacencies in certain zones. Although it speaks unmistakably in a 'French' voice to the extent of transforming 'Mahākāvya' into 'La Grande Parole', it is not supposed to be taken for an authoritative gesture. A case in point is the essay "Les Littératures Africaines dans le champ de la recherche comparatiste" by M. Jacques Chevrier. The act of writing on African literature is in itself, in the essay, a confession of collective French guilt:

L'Afrique, appréhendé dans sa dimension littéraire, ne semble guère avoir été mieux accueillie dans le champ de l'africanisme orthodoxe. Si les africanistes s'intéressent en effet depuis fort longtemps à l'histoire, aux religions, aux langues et d'une façon générale aux sociétés du continent africain, ils semblent en revanche n'aborder qu'avec hésitation et réticence les productions à caractère littéraire.

... l'Afrique littéraire n'est guère mieux accueillie dans les rangs de l'institution universitaire classique où elle fait encore trop souvent figure d'intruse. ...tous les comparatistes qui ouvrent leurs enseignements sur les littératures africaines — et ils sont de plus en plus nombreux — font à un moment ou à un autre l'épreuve de la méfiance de l'étonnement de l'intérêt poli manifesté à l'égard de cette discipline.

(Africa perceived in her literary dimension has not been well-received in the domain of orthodox Africanism. If the Africanists have been taking interest for quite some time in the history, religions, languages in a general way and societies of the African continent, there is hesitation and reticence about literary productions.

... the response to African literature is not welcome in the conservative literary circles, where it is still an intruder.... All the comparatists that start teaching African literature — and they are becoming more and more numerous — experience at some time or other a distrust, surprise and polite interest that is evoked by the discipline.)

M. Chevrier suggests a study of African literature along generic and linguistic lines. And here too, there are problematic zones. Nigeria serves as an example. Should one talk of a national literature or national literatures defined by linguistic territories like English, Yoruba, Hausa or Arabic?

The generic typology raises certain questions. The occidental model (novel, poetry, theatre) is becoming more and more controversial. In the case of some novelists like William Sassine, Jean-Marie Adiaffi, Wole Soyinka, Gabriel Okara, Wewere Liking, texts opt consciously as a rule for generic fusion.

While M. Chevrier suggests fields for comparative research, he warns the reader against the mystique of 'La Négritude'. As he rightly points out, it is a romantic vestige with dangerous political corollaries.

Finally, the collection traces the modern poetic tradition and tries to see it from the point of view of langue. It interprets the tradition in terms of 'mots' and 'parole' and stresses that poetic experimentation in our times is essentially a linguistic adventure that has acquired a sociological dimension. The essay creates an immense panorama that includes Baudelaire, Hölderlin, Eliot along with Octavio Paz, Pablo Neruda, José Martí, Antonio Machado among others. Since the collection acknow-

ledges cultural specificities, it is a little difficult to understand the homogenizing drive that transforms the modern poetic discourse into a convenient generative. What the reader might find significant in this connection is the glossary of poetic movements at the end of the essay. It breaks up poetic experimentation into Romantisme, Symbolisme, Modernisme, Expressionisme, Futurisme and Imagisme. Of these, I would like to quote the definition of Modernisme.

Modernisme: Mouvement littéraire essentiellement latino-américain qui, dans les années 1880-1915, brise avec la tradition purement castillane et s'ouvre très largement au monde moderne dans sa dimension cosmopolite. Le principal artisan de ce renouveau est le Nicaraguayen Ruben Dario. Maître de la forme et de la sensation, il pêle la langue à mille possibilités rythmiques inédites, se rattachant directement au symbolisme français, à Lautréamont et à Nietzsche. Il a pour compagnon notamment le Cubain José Martí, tandis que les Espagnols Juan Ramón Jiménez et Antonio Machado, quelque distance qu'ils prennent par rapport à lui, ne restent pas sourds à son influence. (Modernism: an essentially Latin American literary movement that breaks with the purely Castilian tradition between 1880 and 1915 and opens itself up to the modern world in its cosmopolitan dimension. The principal artisan of the renewal is the Nicaraguan Ruben Dario. Master of form and sensation, he plies language with a thousand rhythmic possibilities, identifying directly with French Symbolism, Lautréamont and Nietzsche. He has partners in the Cuban José Martí, and the Spanish poets Juan Ramón Jiménez and Antonio Machado, although quite different from him, does not remain entirely unaffected by his influence.)

It is a representative definition in which a specificity (Latin American poetry in a certain period) has been transformed into a generative. Shouldn't it be truer to the vocation of a comparatist to talk about modernisms of which Latin American may be one of the manifestations? And if chronological periodization is to be so strictly observed, where should T.S. Eliot, even with his early poetry, stand?

Purna Chowdhury

Jaidev, *The Culture of Pastiche: Existential Aestheticism in the Contemporary Hindi Novel*. Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1993.

Jaidev's book is one of a new line of criticism in English in India which works along a large axis of wide-ranging national cultural issues. Here he explains the culture-shock experienced by most readers in the sub-continent in reading certain kinds of novels written in regional languages and gives a name, cultural pastiche, to the phenomenon that is the particular kind of writing. It implies borrowing surface level codes from Western literature, using them also on the same level not because they are necessary, but because they attract instant attention, and often worse, because they are signs of a culture deemed superior and worse still, because they may serve to make a mockery of traditional values and customs. It is an angry book, anger on behalf of all those who are bewildered to see their values trod underfoot, and one that ends with a strong "plea for cultural care", the lack of which "is good neither for culture, nor for the people". I would like to confess before I go further that I feel the idiom in which I write is not adequate, extensive enough to grasp the text centred on absolute social commitment and approximating to the level of praxis. In fact, the review of such a text may well be a redundant task. At best this review will only be an inept note on its contents.

The plea for cultural care comes from a very deep concern regarding the violence effected upon Third-World societies by an imposition of Western codes. The proliferation of pastiche in modern literature is a sign of cultural crisis for pastiche being a matter of the surface having no reference to the true needs of people can get fetishized only because the signs it draws from get privileged in certain movements of the West, namely, existentialism and modernism. The author works out a connection between the two movements in history and then goes into a short history of pastiche as a form in the West. He is careful in pointing out that pastiche in the West had gained a certain recognition and was used purposively, but the Indian author does not recognize the pasticheur in himself and that leads to a series of disjunctions. It is possible, he asserts, to stand against this onslaught of pastiche by cultural care which implies self-definition in relation to a living shared culture. It becomes necessary at this point to agree on certain distinct markers of a common Indian culture. Very precisely, culture is defined as "preferred goals and ideals, the past and traditions, and present practices". The markers are largely

pan-Indian structures of feelings — “intuitive feeling based responses towards others”, responding “to others in a familiar way”, “respect to elders, neighbourhood and community”, “sharing as opposed to exclusiveness” which implies a lesser extent of individualism and finally “faith in some agency or system beyond or outside the worldly existence”. Existence is not all, the author states. He has also pre-empted the one-many controversy in relation to markers of culture that are pan-Indian by making a strong case for a large solid ground from where one can start opposing pastiche. The forces one is contending with, it must be realized, are gigantic — more so with the liberalization of economy, the growing forces of capitalism and consumerism and certain global structurings of power, each generating a more and more fecund world of pastiche. The fact that Jaidev is able to take such a definite stand proves his strength, one that goes beyond academia, drawing its sustenance from the world of people. He also proves to the modern Indian intellectual that one is not necessarily non-progressive if one accepts norms and values that are traditional or space-bound, that provide the basis of living for a large majority. He achieves this by situating traditional norms and practices within a dense field of references, by contextualizing every passing idea and by a far-ranging vision that studies a cultural set within progressively larger and larger sets so that perspectives remain clear and committed.

To go back to Jaidev’s argument — codes and attitudes in direct contrast to the values of the cultural tradition mentioned above form the substance of pastiche. Alienation of the individual is the most significant code and not just any kind of alienation, as the author is careful to point out, but one that is seen as the very human condition, thus privileging the alienated individual at the expense of the community. Jaidev feels that a class line is evident here separating the elite individual from the common community members. From alienation there is a move towards individual codes of living, of morality and an “arrogant dismissal” of shared culture, a privileging of the artist-hero’s world over the existing society.

At the centre of the text is a group of novels by four modern Hindi writers — Nirmal Verma, Mridula Garg, Krishna Valdev Vaid and Mohan Rakesh, where pastiche takes different forms and operate on different planes. The analyses move along a double surface — the terms posed in the world of the protagonists, their [lack of] substantiation, their value as sensation and the corresponding gaps in the perception of the self, the privileging of the social vacuum in which the alienated

protagonists live on the one hand, and on the other, a close reading of ideologies, attitudes, stylistic devices and imageries in a vast range of both well-known and not so well-known European and American authors. Nirmal Verma's novel *Ek Chithda Sukh* is viewed as a fine novel in its lyrical style, in the author's control over form. There is a close analysis of well-assimilated Proustian techniques in the novel and of the beautiful, intricate play of imagery. Yet it all serves to foreground aestheticism at the expense of life, people, history, creating what Jaidev has elsewhere called "brilliance sans significance". The novel is the story of two couples viewed by a Proustian narrator. In one the protagonist commits suicide and in the other he turns into an embittered aesthete. The latter had once left home to join a group of ultra-radicals, returned embittered to become "a hedonist, a connoisseur of beer and Jazz records, and a drama producer". All praxis is discredited "because revolution did not materialize overnight". There is no deflationary irony either in the visions of the aesthetes. They hate themselves and so Nirmal Verma is compassionate towards them, but Jaidev points out that their hatred exists only on the level of contemplation, of presentable artistic gestures. A very sophisticated use of time frames is made in the novel, but there is chronological confusion on the level of historic details. Jaidev points out that aestheticism in this case debases important issues in the lives of people and this from an author who in his essays eloquently speaks of a 'parampara'. A new dichotomy in Indian intellectual life is touched upon and again Jaidev cryptically points out its source which is Orientalism from within. In the matrix of Orientalism one has to be a beggar or a tribal to retrieve one's 'parampara'; if one is not, it is assumed, one will have to go West. Beyond the acceptance of the thesis urged by its angularity, a nagging question still occurs to readers of lesser faith regarding what 'parampara' actually implies to the modern, industrial, urban, educated Indian in our fast-changing social scenario. Familial bonds are not necessarily projected into larger units, in other words, self-centredness might define family relations, community bonds in urban centres may rotate around private gains, one part of society celebrates while the other half or Ayodhya burns. It is this empty space created by a lack of faith into which pastiche makes an easy entrance. And as far as pastiche, the pedagogic engagement of the text is concerned, Jaidev has an answer in the chapter on Mohan Rakesh.

With the second novelist Mridula Garg, the author is less tolerant as is evident from the chapter heading "Pastiche as Pretence: Three Novels

of Mridula Garg". The novels are *Uske Hisse Ke Dhoop*, *Main aur Main* and *Chittkobra*. An analysis of her novels shows how a total lack of artistic sensibility makes her pick up anything that she feels may be glamorous, fashionable and this results in contradictory and confused stances and attitudes. The polarity of love and marriage, a constant theme in her novels for instance, has very little actual content and the accompanying feminist stance is constantly undercut by the overwhelmingly sexist, patriarchal discourse of the 'liberated' protagonist. The author justly concludes that Mridula Garg ultimately has no respect for any cultural code, Indian or Western, and that "like her heroines (in *Chittkobra*) the author too lacks a viable self- definition".

With the next novelist Krishna Valdev Vaid, the translator of *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame* in Hindi, the reader is, in his avant-garde works, in a "fortified world of pastiche". *Uska Bachpan*, Vaid's first novel, is acknowledged as a work of great merit, one that has also assimilated Western literary influences, but in his avant-garde fiction there is a hostility towards every Indian cultural practice and an arrogance that the author feels has no precedent in Hindi fiction. A style of graffiti, promiscuous sexual norms, brutally sensational details characterize these novels for at their centre is the belief that sexual liberation, "carnavalesque promiscuity" could be the cure for the Indian malaise. In writing about Vaid the author speaks about a long line of Western authors, Boccaccio, Rabelais, Marquis de Sade, Miller and Norman Mailer. Here I feel that Boccaccio and Rabelais belong to a different world order altogether and are not primarily authors of a universe of nausea as for instance Sade is. Vaid is at a particular point compared to Rabelais and his carnivalesque spirit, but that perhaps is putting too much claim on a bourgeois sensibility. Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer* is also evoked repeatedly, the whole question revolving round whether such attitudes of contempt are in any way justifiable in Indian reality. Yet in Miller style is a great redeemer. Since style is difficult to imitate, Vaid borrows its superficial trappings. There is also a long discussion of Beckett because Vaid, Jaidev states, wishes to be regarded as the Indian Beckett. With a very firm grasp over his matter the author shows Beckett's greatness as an artist, the absolutely consistent, brutally aesthetic vision in his works and finally the deeper concerns, the moments of compassion and humanity in him, "Beckett's signature" not accessible to any copyist or imitator. Jaidev's final comment is that as long as "only Vaid writes like Vaid, there is hope for Hindi fiction".

In the next chapter on the two novels by Mohan Rakesh, *Andhere Band Kamre* and *Na Aane Wala Kal*, we see the presence of a critique of pastiche from within a pastiche-ridden world. Mohan Rakesh subverts pastiche by drawing attention to the factors promoting it, by providing contexts, by the use of irony in the narrator-protagonist's views on himself, irony "not as fetish but as linked to a responsible cultural vision", by faith in activism in spite of an overall bleakness in the social situation in *Andhere Band Kamre*. If the protagonist of *Na Aane Wala Kal* tries to live like an outsider, his author does not promote him to a hero but shows him to be a helpless victim. Also often juxtaposed with grim real-life situations, a servant prostituting for money for instance, the studied existentialist stances of the hero are quite deflated.

What Jaidev is then arguing for is a cultural vision in keeping with the positive norms of the Indian 'parampara' — positive in as much as they allow the individual in a poor country to lead a dignified, meaningful life. This vision will necessarily reject or problematize attitudes or ideologies which do not subscribe to it. An important issue in the theory of inter-cultural relations surfaces at this point. It has been generally held that a particular system borrows in accordance with elements that are dominant in its own system. This might have been true in the context of India till a particular period, but is no longer the case suggesting that a radical upheaval, an immense corrosion from within the system has taken place. True, the novels in question, many critics feel, do not belong to the mainstream Hindi novel and may be regarded as ephemeral units soon to be rejected by the system. Given the economic trends, the author is not very sure and feels that the culture of pastiche is here to stay. There is a very slight ambivalence here. One has often felt in the text that the fault lies with the individual, that one is dealing with a lack of moral judgement in an individual and that pastiche is not the sign, cause and effect of a multitude of intersecting issues. In the last two chapters there is an increasing feeling that the author will go beyond the individual, that he will partly see the novelists as shaped by a reality. But he will fight against this for it is absolutely important for him to do so, to have faith that there is another more compulsive reality. It is asking for too much from a text, but could there have been more instances foregrounding the positive in Indian culture, its way of being, its meaning in the contemporary Indian context? There has to be other texts, by Jaidev, by other Indian scholars, to give form to the issues raised in this, for it is only a vision of the positive that can more substantially negativize the negative. Jaidev writes of *Maila Anchal* and

the end where the Gandhian character in the novel is crushed under trucks belonging to Congress Party workers smuggling goods into East Pakistan. *Maila Anchal* has maintained continuity with tradition. But what happens to the novel that comes after *Maila Anchal*, after the truck has moved over? Jaidev also writes of the attitude of the pasticheur as that of the elite opposed to the community. This presupposes a larger question on the relation between literature and the community at large. A radical rethinking of the notion of literature has to be brought about, a shift also perhaps from the world of print, if one wishes to engage with the question of elitism and literature. But to come back to the text. It should be compulsory reading for students of Indian Comparative Literature, and more important, for those beginning to lose faith.

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